Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Texas Master Naturalist?

- A Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) is a person who has completed training as a Texas Master Naturalist, is passionate about the natural world, and is eager to share his or her knowledge and experiences with others.
- In return for the training to become a Texas Master Naturalist, the TMN volunteers his or her time to the local community by assisting with activities that involve the education, preservation, restoration, and conservation of natural resources.

How do I join and become a Texas Master Naturalist?

- To join our chapter and become a Texas Master Naturalist, you must attend an Initial Training course on the region's natural features and the impact that people have on nature. The course includes presentations by biologists, geologists, naturalists, and others from local, state, and federal agencies and universities. The course provides a broad overview for building your knowledge of nature. A fee is charged for the course which includes a textbook, all materials for the course, and chapter dues through the following year.
- You become a Texas Master Naturalist-in-Training when you attend your first Initial Training class and pass a mandatory criminal background check conducted by the state TMN office. As a Naturalist-in-Training, you may engage in all chapter activities and projects. You may also vote on any matter brought before the chapter.
- To achieve certification as a Texas Master Naturalist and earn your certification pin, you must complete the Initial Training Course and also complete a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of advanced training. Advanced training builds on the Initial Training and enables Texas Master Naturalists to gain additional knowledge or a particular skill in order to assist with different volunteer projects. There is no deadline to complete the stated requirements, but a goal should be within a year of starting the class.
- You must consent to a mandatory criminal background check that is conducted by the Texas Master Naturalist state office after you are accepted into the Initial Training program and then updated periodically thereafter. There is no cost for the background check and no credit check is required.

What are my responsibilities as a certified Master Naturalist?

- Once you are certified, it is your responsibility to maintain your certification by completing a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of advanced training each calendar year. If you do not complete these requirements annually, you remain a Texas Master Naturalist but may not use the "Certified" annotation. Certification may be regained by completing the requirements in the next or subsequent years. Pins are awarded for each year of certification/re-certification and lifetime volunteer service hours.
- You must pay annual chapter dues to remain in good standing and retain chapter privileges. Members who do not pay dues are placed in "Inactive" status and may not enter service or training hours.
- You are expected to stay active in the local chapter and attend meetings, take advantage of advanced training offered through the local chapter, and keep accurate records of your service and training hours. As a volunteer, you may not profit from your status or violate the policies, missions and goals of the sponsoring agencies that govern use of the Master Naturalist title.
- All of the volunteer service and advanced training activities must be approved by the chapter board of directors, and you must report your hours in the Volunteer Management System to get credit toward certification.

What is a volunteer chapter?

- Texas Master Naturalists volunteer in a community organized into self-governing chapters, with partner/agency staff serving as chapter advisors. The Texas Master Naturalist program is a partnership of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) and local partners in each community. Our chapter advisors are Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and TPWD employees.
- The Bois d'Arc Chapter area includes Fannin County. A member may reside outside the chapter area.

How is the program supported?

- This is a self-supporting program. Volunteers pay to cover the costs of their training. Local chapters are supported by training fees, chapter dues, and donations (money or in-kind services such as free meeting space) from local partners. The training fee includes chapter dues through the end of the following year.
- A portion of the training fees are also used to support statewide administration of the program.

When and where does the chapter meet?

- The chapter generally meets on a monthly basis for social/meal time, an advanced training session, and a short meeting for reports on chapter projects and announcements of upcoming events.
- A schedule of chapter meetings will be provided at the first Initial Training class session. Meetings are currently on the third Tuesday of the month at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Fannin County office in Bonham beginning with social time at 5:30, training at 6:00 and the meeting at 7:00 pm.
- Meetings are open to the public and guests are encouraged to attend.

What are volunteer service projects?

- Volunteer service projects are activities approved by the chapter that provide service to and/or promote the welfare of the natural resources within our community.
- Service projects run the gamut from monitoring bluebird boxes to teaching classes to performing community/citizen scientist data collection and research.
- Almost anything you are passionate about could be a volunteer service project. Just ask!

What is advanced training?

- Advanced training (AT) is classes or other educational activities that increase one's knowledge of the natural world. Advanced training is presented at most chapter meetings and is also available through many other organizations and the state TMN office. Many AT sessions are available online.
- Advanced training should promote local knowledge for local service.
- Advanced training sessions may be in-person or watched live on-line provided there is the opportunity to interact with the presenter. There are some exceptions to on-line sessions.

This all sounds great, but what if I cannot attend all the Initial Training class sessions?

- Attendance at all class sessions is highly recommended so that you can achieve certification within your first year as a Texas Master Naturalist. Missed classes must be made up within a specified time.
- The Naturalist-in-Training is required to make up any missed sessions as described in the Class Attendance Policy that will be provided at the first class. Generally, classroom sessions can be made up by watching a recording of the missed lecture and answering questions about the class. Field trips will need to be attended when next presented, usually during next year's Initial Training course. The Training Committee will work with the student on a case-by-case basis to determine how to make up missed classes or field trips.

How do I sign up to attend the Initial Training program?

- If you have a recruiting package, find the application. If you are on our website, please download and print the application. Please complete both sides of the application and sign it.
- Please do not leave anything blank or the application may be returned to you and you could lose your place in the class. If a field is not applicable, please put "N/A". All commitments at the top of the back page and the liability release must be initialed. Please tell us of any interests you have, but you will not be turned down and the application will not be returned if this area is blank.
- Sign the application and return it with the indicated fee to the address on the application. If you are registering with someone else in your household and sharing a book with them, please fill out a signed application for each person and mail them together with the indicated fee. Applications are accepted on an as-received basis, so return your application(s) as soon as possible to secure your spot.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at boisdarctmn.training @gmail.com. Additional information can be found on our state website at https://txmn.tamu.edu/ and our chapter website at https://txmn.org/boisdarc/ .