

Avoiding poison ivy is the best bet, researchers agree. "Leaves of three, let it be" is the motto repeated by Naturalist. Each leaf of the poison ivy plant has three leaflets. Since the poison ivy rash can take its time in showing up, experts recommend a pre-emptive strike approach. If you think you have come into contact, wash the [oil] off first, using rubbing alcohol. Then use plain hot water. Then use soap and hot water. Discard the soap, and wash the washcloth. Some research suggested its good enough to wash with plain soap and water of any temperature and OK to skip the alcohol and plain water steps but maybe not with the "Super" varieties. If you're out on a hiking trail or camping, use cold water from a stream or other source, the AAD recommends, and the sooner the better. Once you've washed the oil off your skin, you are not contagious and cannot give the poison ivy rash to someone else. All experts agree on one point, however: launder the clothes you wore when exposed to the poison ivy as well as tents and other camping gear. The oil can stick to clothing and re-expose you.

Home treatments have been around for a long time and include calamine lotion, 1% hydrocortisone cream and finally, Benadryl by mouth. How effective will they be against "Super" poison Ivy will require research or trial and error.

Look for an over-the-counter product containing bentoquatam. It may be effective for some if applied before exposure. It provides a physical barrier so the oil can't penetrate the skin.

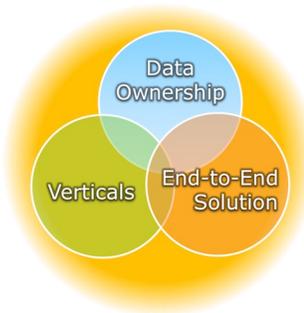
Wearing long pants and long-sleeve shirts, though not always plausible in our summer heat, is also recommended, as well as wearing socks and shoes to garden. No more barefoot, country boy walk in the woods. Darn!

Big Data & Small Ideas

By Bob Ross

The Public Broadcast System (PBS), television channel 13 in North Central Texas, recently aired a one-hour program about collecting and storing information. The program title was "The Human Face of Big Data" which explains how we humans are accumulating massive amounts of data throughout the world. We are better at doing this than ever before in the history of mankind due to the invention of computers, internet, cell phones and hooking up with social media. No matter what one's country of origin or ethnicity, we are all becoming connected throughout the world.

The PBS program illustrated how, around the year 2000, there was an explosion of informational data. It was at this time that the inhabitants of the world began to exchange billions of ideas and thoughts. Prior to news agencies and governments informing us of events we quickly learned about such things as the earthquake in Haiti, the Arab Spring, Hurricane Sandy, or outbreaks of war in desolate areas because of social media. The local folks in these areas would text or tweet about the event, and suddenly, the world was getting a front row seat learning about the action taking place. Such data gives us the ability to see the world and hear the stories that will emerge from the data.



Some scientists have learned how to take data and develop algorithms to get a better use from the information. What is an algorithm? An algorithm is a process or set of rules to be followed in calculations or other problem-solving operations, especially by a computer. Many scientists agree that algorithms exist that perform calculation, data processing, and automated reasoning.

Taking data and plugging it into an algorithm can give a multitude of answers about various topics. For example, a city might get information from everyone's cell phone while they are driving around in its city limits. Each cell phone has basically a gyro and that gyro will rotate accordingly when each of the drivers hit a pothole. Therefore, that city could take all this input from cell phones and determine where there are potholes in need of repair. Many scientists say they can take informational input, along with an algorithm, where they have all a person's daily habits over a period of time and eventually the scientists claim they are able to predict a person becoming depressed prior to the depression actually happening. There are scientists who claim they can combine certain data with the correct algorithm and predict a virus way before it occurs.

The flip side to all this “heady stuff” is that we all are giving up massive amounts of personal information each time we use our cell phone or get on the internet. The dark side is that governments, organizations, hackers, or even retail marketers may have access to our information and we lose some of our privacy. How do you feel about the trade-off?

The PBS program had me thinking about how we, Texas Master Naturalists, could use data and algorithms to achieve our purposes and projects we have in all our chapters throughout the State of Texas. What kind of information would be needed to better the natural habitat of wildlife throughout the state? What would be needed to determine the long-range and continued growth with our state parks all over Texas? Which information would we need to acquire to determine long-range conservation of things, such as: water resources, watersheds, loss of prairie lands and grasses, or utilizing better xeriscapes to promote the uses of native flora.

The next time you are volunteering time with one of your Elm Fork projects, think about all the information that is available about what it is you are accomplishing and begin to develop a plan about what you would like to see as an improvement. If you have worked on a project for an extended amount of time you have a history of information. Such information could be paired with an algorithm and possibly give you eons of knowledge about the project and where it is headed in the future. As humans, it is natural for all of us to take things for granted. We need to consider how to get out of the mold of doing things the same way and remember that change is not always bad.

One of the first things you do if you establish a vegetable garden is that you learn how to plot your garden space on a map so you will know how to rotate your crops each growing season. The rotating prevents one from overusing the soil and allows the soil to rebuild its nutrients for future growth. Use this concept of change the next time you are volunteering time at the LLELA greenhouse, building a new trail in Trophy Club, leading a bird walk at Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center, or working at the Interpretive Center at Lake Ray Roberts. Use the data that is all around you and figure a way to use that information to better serve the project.

As members of Elm Fork Chapter, we all have a love for nature and its surroundings. We talk how we do not want to see species extinction, loss of natural resources, erosion of soils, loss of rivers and streams with their riparian zones, or the loss of clean air. Let’s take the next step by organizing the bountiful amounts of data around our projects and determine what would better serve the projects. Our members are highly educated and smart. It is a matter of giving some thoughts about what it is we think we can do to better serve the project, and especially to better serve the community. Who knows? You may come up with a great idea that not only benefits an Elm Fork project, but benefits a need for the entire world. Remember, great accomplishments oftentimes come from a simple idea or thought.



Waiting for the dawn— Photo Dorothy Thetford

There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature - the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter.

**- Rachel Carson
The Sense of Wonder**



Monarch heralds spring—Photo Marilyn Blanton

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A GOOD TIME TO IDENTIFY THOSE ELMs

By Joanne Fellows

Now is a good time to identify those elms. American, Winged, Slippery are blooming now, in spring. Cedar elm will bloom in the fall. The green fruit, or samara, is oblong and flattened. The seed is scattered by the wind.

Which kind of Elm? The samara is the best way to tell the difference between an American, Winged or Slippery elm.

Winged Elm
Ulmus alata



Winged Elm
Ulmus alata



American Elm
Ulmus americana

A narrow fruit 1/2 inch, deep notch, margins hairy, pale yellow-green ripening brown (tinged red in southern range)



A small fruit 3/8 inch, narrow, oval with hairy margins, dark, often reddish, fruits sparse and short stalked.



Slippery Elm
Ulmus rubra

A fruit 5/8 inch, rounded, without notch, short-stalked, not hairy on the margins (unlike all other native elms)

Cedar Elm
Ulmus crassifolia

Cedar elm is the most widespread native elm in Texas, but it flowers and sets seed in the fall. If you find an elm now and it has some wings, but no sign of blooms or fruit, then it is a Cedar elm.



Samara: fruits 3/8 inch, oval, hairy, light brown, deeply notched, few in short-stalked clusters in the autumn.

Photos: Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources and Environment

Is it illegal to pick bluebonnets?



There is no law against picking Bluebonnets in Texas, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety.

However, there are some areas where it *is* illegal or against the rules. Before you pick any bluebonnets, it is important to note where you are. There are laws against criminal trespassing, so ensure that you are not on private property when you stop to take pictures with the bluebonnets.

There are also laws against damaging or destroying rights-of-way and government property. While picking a few wildflowers may be okay, you should not dig up large clumps of flowers, and you should never drive your vehicle into a field of wildflowers. Remember,

other Texans want to enjoy the wildflowers too!

If you do plan to visit a State Park, note that it is against the rules to pick, cut, or destroy any wildflowers or plant life on the park grounds.

Many gorgeous wildflowers can be found along our state's roadways. For your safety, and the safety of others, consider following these tips from the Texas Department of Public Safety:

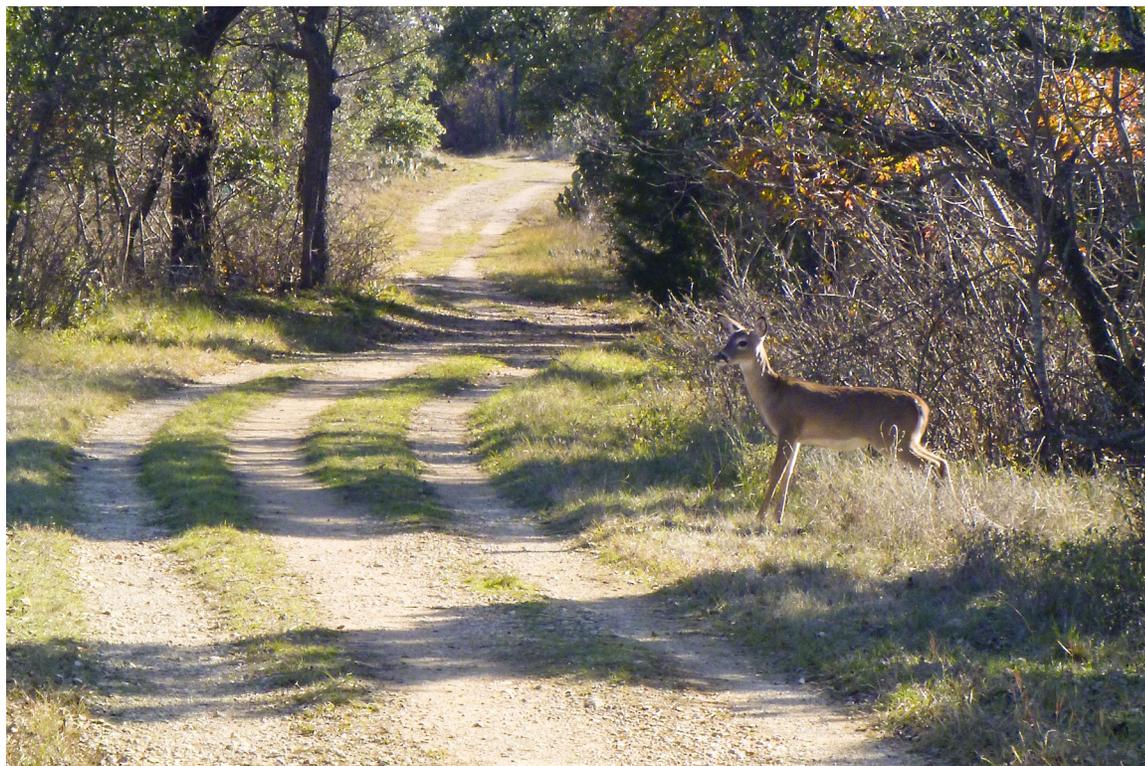
- Always signal before leaving or entering the roadway.
- Park off the roadway, parallel to the road in the direction of traffic.
- Park on the same side of the roadway that the flowers are on.
- Don't cross lanes of traffic on foot to get to the wildflowers.
- Obey all signs that prohibit parking on the roadway.

- See more at: <http://www.takecareoftexas.org/hidden/it-illegal-pick-bluebonnets#sthash.6bHGFam2.dpuf>

From the Album



Monarch butterfly —Alex Lieban



At Elm Fork —Jonathan Reynolds