



# Highland Lakes Steward

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## MISSION

The Texas Master Naturalist program is a natural resource-based volunteer training and development program sponsored statewide by Texas AgriLife Extension and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The mission of the program is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the state of Texas

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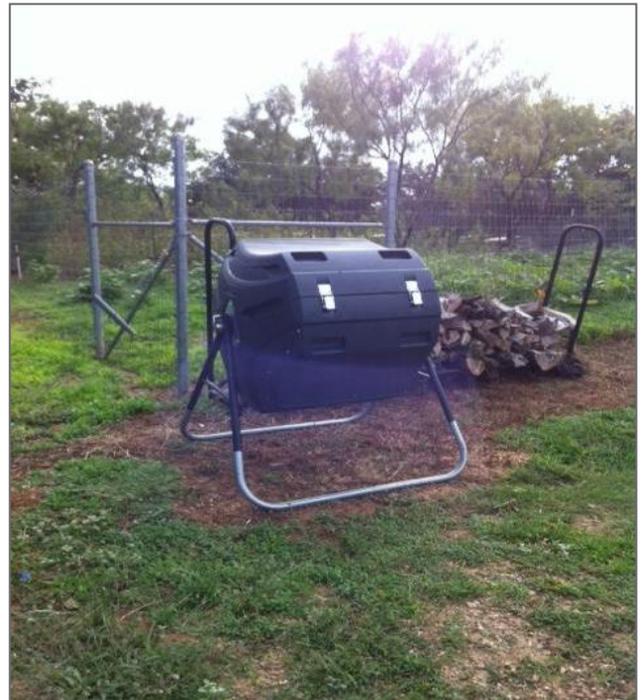
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## COMPOST

By Fred Franki

I recently embarked on a new composting adventure. Over the years I have tried various methods, all successful, but some more time consuming and backbreaking than others. I had the large, stationary bin where everything goes in the top and magic comes out the trap door at the bottom. First I had the plywood homemade kind, then a store bought plastic model. Impossible to stir, so the compost takes a long time. I then had the stackable plastic tower. In theory, you can easily re-stack it while shifting and stirring the contents. Ha! Some of the best compost I ever had resulted from a pile of forgotten leaves in the far corner of the backyard. It was wonderful stuff and oh so easy.

Now I've spent some bucks for the LIFETIME 80 gallon Tumbler shown above. It took several hours to assemble, after buying the right wrenches and deciphering the instructions. The instructions were 25 pages of just pictures, no words. I had the tumbler full within a couple of days. The first thing that went inside was its own cardboard package material. I tore it up into small 8" x 11" size pieces, approximately. Then grass clippings and kitchen scraps were added. Call me weird but I love to save kitchen scraps and carry them out to the compost bin. Harvesting the compost is very satisfying too! It absolutely makes a positive difference in your garden. By using a compost bin you are accelerating Mother Nature's recycling process and capturing the results for your purposes. Microbes in the compost are like



steroids for the soil in the garden. The best thing we can do for our trees is add compost around them. The science of microbes is a whole separate topic, but to put it simply, plants cannot use the nutrients in soil unless microbes are present. Phil, maybe you can explain the science of soil microbes in an article.

Healthy compost is alive with microbes and they need five elements to thrive, browns, greens, oxygen, moisture, and heat.

Browns include dead leaves/plants, twigs/wood shavings, straw/hay, paper/cardboard. Also manure from herbivores like cows and chickens. Provides carbon for the microbes.

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**OCTOBER MEETING**

by Linda O’Nan,

Photos by Mike Childers



At our October 3 HLMN meeting, Dr. Rudy Rosen, a research professor at Texas State University, gave us an interesting program on "H2O" with the latest concepts on water conservation efforts taught from elementary students through the college level. Everyone welcomed Dr. Rosen at the

LBJ Event Center in Johnson City with a "sit in"--the facility had temporarily misplaced the seating. The subject was "chaired" until the next meeting.



**NOVEMBER MEETING** by Linda O’nan

We are in for some fun this month! Join us Wednesday, November 7, 1pm, for our monthly meeting (held at the 1st Methodist Church-Marble Falls, Youth Bldg.) and welcome 13 year old Benjamin Shrader, and his mother, Mary. Commander Ben is an invasive species warrior and will educate and delight us with his enthusiasm about these pests. Go to his web site, commanderben.com , and be amazed at all this young man is involved in and be ready for a good time at our meeting.

**Stewardship**

An ethic that embodies cooperative planning and management of environmental resources with organizations, communities and others to actively engage in the prevention of loss of habitat and facilitate its recovery in the interest of long-term sustainability

## FACTS ABOUT GLASS RECYCLING

by Lyn Davis

Here are some interesting facts about glass and recycling from earth911.com:

- **80:** Percentage of glass that is estimated to be recycled into new containers.
- **3.0 million:** Amount, in tons, of glass that was recovered for recycling in 2009 according to the U.S. EPA.
- **80:** Approximate percentage of glass beverage containers in California that gets recycled, mostly due to bottle bills that encourage recycling by offering refunds for glass bottles.
- **30:** Length, in minutes, that the energy from recycling one glass bottle can power a computer.
- **Fifty:** Percentage of recycled material that glass manufacturers plan to use in the production of new glass bottles by the end of 2013. This step will save enough energy to power 45,000 households for a year, and 181,550 tons of waste from landfills each month.

- **20:** Amount, in tons, of color-sorted glass that a typical glass processing facility can recycle per hour.

The highest value product made from recycled glass bottles and jars is new glass bottles and jars. Another high-value end product is fiberglass insulation. Both of these end uses require recycled glass that is color-sorted and free of all contaminants.

Glass that does not meet the specifications for manufacture into new glass containers can be used for a variety of “secondary” applications. These include countertops and floors, landscaping, tile, abrasives, filtration and as an ingredient in roadway products.

(Continued from page 1)

## COMPOST

Greens include grass clippings, green plants and trimmings, kitchen scraps such as fruits/vegetable/eggs/coffee grounds. Provides nitrogen for the microbes.

Being able to stir or turn the compost allows air into the pile and provides oxygen needed by the microbes.

Like all living things, microbes need water, but in the right amount. Grass clippings and kitchen scraps add moisture and you can add water from the garden hose if needed. It should be a little damp in the bin but not wet.

Active compost temperatures range from 80 to 150 degrees Fahrenheit. A sunny spot is usually best for the bin.

Other important hints

- The ratio of browns and greens is important, 20 parts browns to 1 part green. Too much green stuff can lead to a smelly situation.
- Compost starters can be purchased but usually not needed.

- It takes 2-3 months to see results. If you are a real enthusiast, start two bins at different times so you don't have to wait so long between batches.

- Bugs will invade. Don't worry about it. A cover will keep out furry varmints.

- Do not add to compost bin

- Meat, bones, greases, dairy, or bread (attracts pests)

- Anything treated with pesticides or herbicides

- Particle board or other treated wood

- Black walnut leaves which inhibit growth. I've had bad luck with pecan shells too.

- Diseased plants or weeds with a lot of seeds. Heat from the pile will kill some diseases/seeds but not all.

- Pet or human waste

- Plastic, foil, etc.

- Be aware that oak leaves and pine needles decompose slowly

## HILL COUNTRY JAYS AND NEST-ROBBING

by Sherry Bixler

Colorful, loud and usually aggressive, jays always attract attention. Although only the Blue Jay and Western Scrub-Jay are found in the Hill Country, both Green Jays and the rare Brown Jay are found in south Texas while Mexican and Pinon Jays are found in west Texas. Gray Jays are resident across the northern states and Canada; Stellar's Jays are birds of the mountain west. Two other jays, the Island Scrub-Jay and the Florida Scrub-Jay, are restricted to very small areas.

The Western Scrub-Jay found in our area is distinctively different from the sub-species found on the west coast which is much more strongly marked. Only the Stellar's Jay and Blue Jay have prominent crests. Jays have harsh calls and are usually noisy and aggressive birds that mob hawks and owls, but are very inconspicuous when nesting to avoid unwanted attention.

Jays usually lay three to six eggs that need four to six weeks to fledge. While their diet is primarily composed of insects, fruit, nuts and seed, most jays are nest-robbers along with their close relatives the crows, ravens and nut-crackers. Nest robbers will eat both eggs and nestlings of other species – an unfortunate trait that reduces the success rate of many song-birds. Since their bills are strong enough to crack nuts and acorns, it is always hoped that the greater part of their diet comes from fruit, nuts, seeds and insects. And since most jays will come to feeders, offering a variety of seed, fruit and nuts can be a deterrent.



Western Scrub-Jay (above),  
Blue Jay (below)



## PROTECT YOUR TREES

submitted by Sammye Childers

If your trees or landscape are damaged, the International Arboriculture Association (ISA) recommends that you:

- Contact your homeowner's insurance company.
- Have the insurance company send a professional tree and landscaping appraiser out to your property immediately after the damage has occurred.
- Have the appraiser determine your financial loss, including the cost of removal and repair.
- Contact a local ISA Certified Arborist if repair or replacement is needed.

Just as you would with any other valuable asset, document your investment in landscaping to help establish its worth. ISA suggests taking pictures of trees and plants while they are healthy to make insurance processing simpler with "before and after" examples.

## COMMENTS ON THE ROUGH-LEAF DOGWOOD (*CORNUS DRUMMONDII*)

by Phil Wyde

Today I am writing about a small tree that grows in this area, that I planted and which until recently, terribly disappointed me. The tree is the rough-leaf dogwood (*Cornus drummondii*).

To understand the great disappointment that I had in my rough-leaf dogwood, you have to know about my expectations when I planted it. Unfortunately, I am not going to look good in telling this tale. However, I am willing to expose myself to possible snide remarks and smirks from you if it means that I can help some of you benefit from my experience.

I will start with the first time that I ever noticed dogwood trees. It was in the spring of 1967 a few months after we moved to Lexington, Kentucky to start my first semester at the University of Kentucky. April came and throughout the campus, the city and the surrounding area, dogwoods and redbud trees were blooming everywhere. They were spectacular! (See Fig. 2.) I quickly resolved that if I ever had property, I would plant some of these trees on it. (Back then owning property was as likely as my ever becoming a Texan!)

In 1973, we moved to Houston and bought a house that had a very nice redbud tree, but not a single dogwood – for a good reason. Dogwoods do not readily grow in Houston.

More than 25 years later we bought land here in the Texas Hill Country, right on the Llano River. I brought a friend over to see the property and as he and I walked around the land, he pointed out that I had several dogwood trees growing on a slope bordering an inlet of the Llano River that inserts itself into our property. I got so excited that dogwoods could grow here I went out and bought another from a Kingsland native plant dealer (that has since gone out of business) and planted it right in front of our house. Note that when I looked at the trees already growing on the property and the one that I bought, there were no blooms. Well late the following spring blooms did appear. However, instead of the relatively large white flowers that I envisioned, my dogwood trees produced tiny clusters of small, compact, white flowers. Moreover, instead of becoming graceful, “airy” branching trees, my trees formed much denser and far from graceful specimens. After some hasty investigations, I quickly



Figure 1. Rough-leaved dogwood fruiting 09/27/2012 (PW's yard)

learned that although I did have dogwood trees, they were rough-leaf dogwoods (*Cornus drummondii*; Fig. 1) and not the flowering dogwoods (*Cornus florida*; Fig. 2) that I had fallen in love with. That wasn't the end of my disappointment. I soon found out that my dogwoods suckered like crazy. Little dogwoods popped up everywhere within a radius of 20 feet of the parent trees.

To try and make up for my folly, I went out and bought a flowering dogwood from Home Depot (!?!). This turned out to be worse than my original error. As I found out, *Cornus florida* is a tree that favors acid soil, and of course, our soil is alkaline. My beloved flowering dogwood died an ugly, slow, tedious death. I actually felt grief.

By now you may be wondering why I am spending time telling you about a tree that caused me so much disappointment and a story that makes most apparent some of my mental and gardening deficiencies. The more discerning of you may be wondering why I am no longer “terribly disappointed” about my native dogwood trees. I will try to put your minds to rest after I tell you some things about *Cornus drummondii*.

The rough-leaf dogwood is a small tree that usually only grows to 15 to 20 feet tall (ref. 1 and 2). It likes



Figure 2 Pink and White Flowering Dogwoods

to grow in dry to moist, alkaline soils but apparently is quite adaptable since it is found throughout Central and other parts of Texas, in Ohio, Illinois, Nebraska and as far north as Ontario, Canada. In one reference (ref. 1 written by a naturalist from Boerne, Texas) it stated that although this tree can be found growing in Central Texas profusely in full-sun fence rows, the rough-leaf dogwood grows best as an understory tree in moist soils and in shady or partly sunny creek bottoms. I emphasize this description since the trees that I found on my property when I first came here were growing exactly in those conditions. (I just recently saw some more growing at the edge of Lake LBJ on Linda O’Nan’s bottom land.)

The leaves of *Cornus drummondii* are simple and elongated, with simple veins on their undersurface (see Fig. 1). The common name comes from the fact that the upper surface of the leaves is slightly rough to the touch. Interestingly, the leaves grow opposite of each other (a not so common occurrence). You can remember this by keeping in mind the mnemonic MAD (for maple, ash and dogwood – which all have this leaf-growing characteristic; see ref. 1). In the fall, the leaves often turn maroon. Before the leaves fall in the winter, these trees form clusters of dense white fruit about a quarter of an inch in diameter (see Fig. 1). Many birds like the white fruit – which I can attest to. I have watched large numbers of them descend on my fruiting rough-leaf dogwood trees and devour the fruit with enthusiasm.

This now brings me to why I am no longer so disappointed in my rough-leaf dogwood trees. First off, other than having to frequently mow or hand cut the

suckers around the tree that I planted in front of my house, they take no care, and to date, have had no evident diseases or insect pests. Second, although I am not enamored with their blossoms, I very much like their appearance when fruiting – and without the blossoms there would not be any fruit. More important, even if I do not love this tree’s blossoms, butterflies and bees do. Moreover, when I carefully consider them, my dogwood trees are not bad looking at other times of the year. Another very important point in their favor – and this only dawned on me after living here through a number of heavy rains and floods – is that the rough-leaf dogwoods that I have growing on the slope of our inlet provide good erosion control. And of course, I am happy to see the birds, butterflies and bees that the blossoms and fruit attract.

In case you did glean from my tale all of the mistakes that I made, I will give you a partial list here: 1) DO NOT PLANT anything that you do not know what its growth characteristics are, or what it will be like when full grown; 2) DO NOT PLANT anything that is NOT MEANT TO GROW HERE; and 3) Unless you really know what you are buying you should purchase your plants from a business that has more of an interest in selling plants than making a profit (a good example would be Backbone Nursery).

My last thoughts are: 1) If I have made you think of getting a rough-leaf dogwood I am pleased, but please be sure not to plant it where you cannot readily get to the suckers to remove them. You could end up with a thicket of dogwood trees. 2) The next time that you see me, I hope that you do not smirk at me too much. I really have revealed some of my deficiencies in hopes that you may be spared my experience; and 3) I still very much wish that I owned at least one true flowering dogwood tree.

### References

[http://npsot.org/wp/boerne/files/2011/01/Native\\_Dogwood\\_is\\_NICE.pdf](http://npsot.org/wp/boerne/files/2011/01/Native_Dogwood_is_NICE.pdf)

[http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=CODR](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=CODR)

Nokes, Jill. 2001. How to Grow Native Plants of Texas and the Southwest.

University of Texas Press, Austin.

[Native Texas Plants: Landscaping Region by Region](#) (2002) Wasowski, S. & A.

Wasowski. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Lone Star Books. Available Barnes and Noble.

## GALLERY

by Jerry Stone



Painted Lady Butterfly (*Vanessa cardui*) on Cowpen Daisy (*Verbesina encelioides*) taken in Horseshoe Bay on 9/23/12 showing underside of wings



Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanilla*) on Cowpen Daisy (*Verbesina encelioides*) taken in Horseshoe Bay on 9/23



Blue-winged Wasp (*Scolia dubia*) on Cowpen Daisy (*Verbesina encelioides*) taken in Horseshoe Bay on 9/23.



*Scolia dubia*, also known as the blue-winged wasp, is a 0.8–1.0 in. long wasp that ranges from New England to Florida and west to Arizona and California. The head, thorax, and first two abdominal segments are black, while the remainder of the abdomen is red with two bright yellow spots on the third abdominal segment. The distal section of the blue-black wings has longitudinal wrinkles. These wasps nectar on flowers in late summer and early fall

# GALLERY

by Jerry Stone



Painted Lady Butterfly (*Vanessa cardui*) on Cowpen Daisy (*Verbesina encelioides*) taken in Horseshoe Bay on 9/23/12

# GALLERY

by Jerry Stone



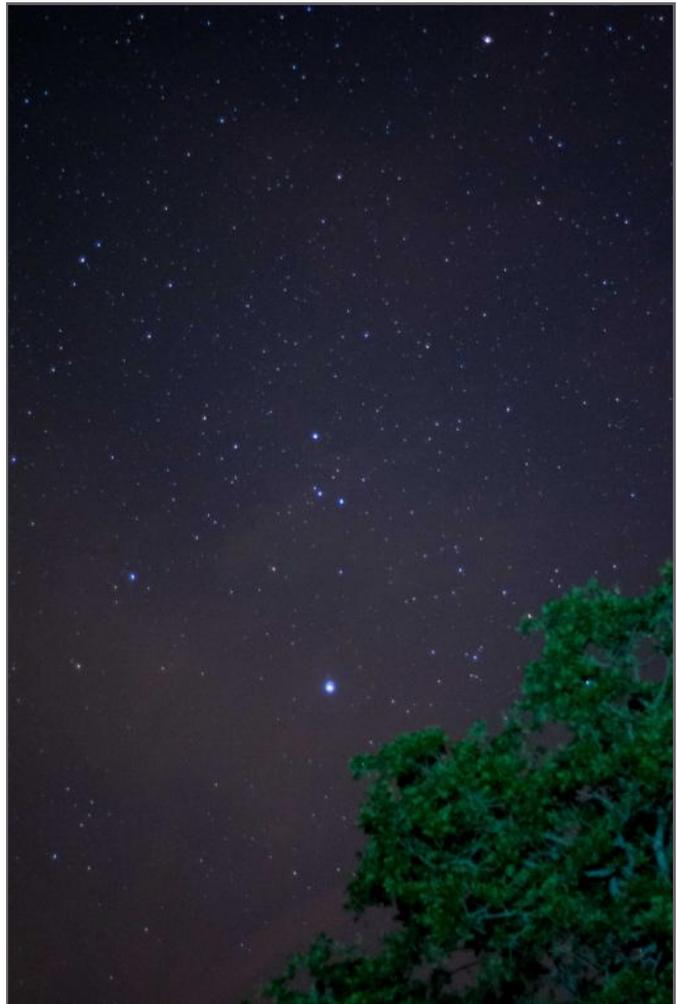
Cowpen Daisy (*Verbesina encelioides*) taken in Horseshoe Bay on 9/23



Lindheimer's Senna (*Senna Lindheimeri*) taken in Horseshoe Bay on 9/23



Male Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) taken in Horseshoe Bay on 9/8



Again I was playing around taking night sky shots on 9/11. I lit the foreground tree with a flashlight during the shot

### OCTOBER - NOVEMBER EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Quail Management for the Texas Hill Country Workshop Oatmeal, TX Community Center	Oct 26 10am-5pm
Texas Mater Naturalist Conference Camp Allen, Navasota, TX	Oct 26-28
Rainwater Revival <a href="http://rainwaterrevival.com/">http://rainwaterrevival.com/</a> Boerne, TX	Oct 27
Going Buggy Program Balcones Canyonlands Wildlife Refuge	Oct 30 9am - 2:30pm
Diva Women Outdoors Worldwide Inks Lake State Park	Nov 1 10am-12:30pm
Texas Society for Ecological Restoration Annual Conference - txser.org Rio Grande Valley & World Birding Center, Weslaco, TX	Nov 2-4
HLMN November Monthly Meeting - Commander Ben - Benjamin Shrader - Invasives First Methodist Church Junior Building, Marble Falls, TX	Nov 7 1pm
Project Feeder Watch New Season begins Your Backyard	Nov 10
HLMN Galveston Field Trip Galveston Island	Nov 11-15
Better Lights for Starry Nights - Bill Wren of the MacDonald Observatory Enchanted Rock State Natural Area ( <a href="http://www.hillcountryskies.org">www.hillcountryskies.org</a> )	Nov 15 6:30-10pm
Texas Recycles Day	Nov 15

### FUTURE EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Annual HLMN Awards Banquet Old Blanco Courthouse	Dec 5 5:30pm
4th Annual State of the Prairie Conference Kingsville, TX	Dec 6-9

For volunteer opportunities and events scheduled at Inks Lake State Park, Blanco State Park, and Balcones Canyonlands, Balcones Canyonlands Preserve, check these websites for information:

[http://beta-www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/parks/find-a-park/inks-lake-state-park/park\\_events/](http://beta-www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/parks/find-a-park/inks-lake-state-park/park_events/)

[http://beta-www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/parks/find-a-park/blanco-state-park/park\\_events/](http://beta-www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/parks/find-a-park/blanco-state-park/park_events/)

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/balcones/>

<http://friendsofbalcones.org/>

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/wildland/onlineregistration/ecowebevents.cfm>

Please submit pictures, articles, reports, stories, calendar and event entries, etc. to [chili865@gmail.com](mailto:chili865@gmail.com). Photos should have captions and appropriate credits. The deadline for submissions to each month's newsletter is the 10th of the month and publication will be by the 15th.