



We are a group of trained volunteers who share our appreciation and knowledge of nature with the community through outreach, education, and conservation/restoration projects



President's Message *By Bert Stipelcovich*

Fellow Chapter Members:

The pandemic continues to impact us, but we have good news to report!

TMN Annual Meeting

The event begins in less than two weeks, and our chapter has been working hard to get ready. Thanks to everyone who volunteered as Content Host for the virtual sessions. All training is now complete. We will have a TMNCPC practice session soon using the TMN WebEx Events account, so that we can get more comfortable in our role. I am also working on a back-channel communications solution so that Content Hosts can communicate during the event.

Our Virtual Field Trip Team, led by Terri Hurley and filmed by Greg Hurley, completed all filming at Seabourne Creek Nature Park. All that remains is the hard work to create a concise and compelling film from the video footage — a daunting task being taken on by John Vindekilde.

I will schedule two meetings soon to discuss the Annual Meeting and to walk through the [TMN 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting](#) application. It has many useful features, but some aspects are not intuitive. You can call me with questions as well. [Registration](#) ends Friday, October 2 at 11:59 p.m.

Fall Class Initial Training Rolls On!

The interns in the fall class are closing in on completing their initial training requirements. With only five sessions remaining, Carol Hawkins and her team continue to deliver awesome speakers and great content. While most TMN chapters have put training class training on hold, our chapter adapted and held a spring and fall class!

Spring Class Beginning to Take Shape

The class has already begun filling up with people registering early. Shannon Westveer, New Class Director (Spring), is already hard at work securing speakers and finalizing the schedule!

TMN Virtual Volunteer Fair

The state program presented a first-of-its-kind Texas Master Naturalist™ Virtual Volunteer Fair on September 2. A significant number of our chapter members attended and received volunteer service hours totaling 161 hours! If you missed this event, another TMN Virtual Volunteer Fair is planned for the Spring.

"Slack Attack!" Basic Training

More Slack online training classes are coming soon!

Continue to stay safe. As always, contact me with any questions, concerns, and suggestions.

All the best, Bert Stipelcovich 713-540-2378

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Please send chapter events and nature-related articles, photos, and items of interest to the chapter to [Lynn](#) by the 27th of the month.

Suggestions for the newsletter are also welcome. Thanks.

**Lynn Trenta,
Courier Editor**

The Membership Minute *By Bob Naeger, TMN Membership Director*

Congratulations to the following members who recently achieved certifications and milestones:

Initial Certification

- Pam Jones
- Dianna LaManna
- Lisa Pasley
- John Rouane
- Linda Shirley
- Noel Zinn

2020 Recertification (45 members recertified so far)

- Sandra Brown
- Johanna DeYoung
- Jamie Fairchild
- Margo Margot
- Ron Master
- Andrea Morgenstern
- Debbie Wendt

250 Hour Milestone

- Jo Willars



The recertification pin for 2020 is the American Bumble Bee!

All pins that have been earned this year have mailed to the recipients. We will continue to mail pins as they are earned until we are able to resume in-person meetings.



Virtual Nature Venture TMN and TMN Gulf Coast

Tickets · \$35

www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-nature-venture-registration-118511640507

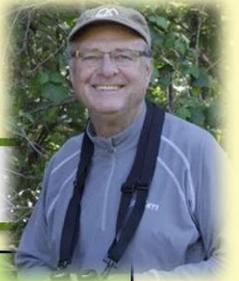
Get ready to get outdoors--join us for a Virtual Nature Venture fundraiser in support of and hosted by the Texas Master Naturalist Program Gulf Coast Chapter.

For our VIRTUAL NATURE VENTURE, what makes our event a “virtual” one is that it allows you to walk, run, stroll, paddle, swim or sit – on your own time, wherever you choose – a neighborhood route, a nature trail, a park, or your backyard! You choose your place and your activity and complete it between October 3-17, 2020. Then share your completion pictures, wearing your Virtual Nature Venture swag, for all to see!

As you participate with the event through your own personal Virtual Nature Venture, challenge yourself to one (or all) of our three optional challenges –

- 1) Post a picture participating in your event, and you will be entered in a drawing to win a prize. Post these pictures to our Facebook Event Page and/or Instagram – use the hashtag - [#TexasNatureVenture](https://www.instagram.com/TexasNatureVenture).
- 2) iNaturalist! Participate in an iNaturalist Collection challenge - More details to be announced soon. Those who participate in the iNat project will be entered into a drawing for a prize
- 3) Challenge yourself to Run or Walk a 5K – post your pic and time to complete on our Virtual Nature Venture Facebook event page and all times submitted will be entered into a drawing for a prize. No age groups or categories – all runners and walkers for fun!





September Chapter Program “Hawk Migration” by Glenn Olsen

On September 6th via Zoom, we were privileged to have Glenn Olsen present the September Program. He is a well-known expert on birds who leads many bird trips and often teaches classes on birds. He spoke to us about the Fall migration and how to recognize hawks during the fall migration.

In this presentation he discussed how and why hawks migrate, some from Alaska and Canada to South America. He explored locations to observe hawks during migration as well as how to identify hawks in flight.

Most people are more likely to see some of our resident or wintering hawks, perched or flying, and Olsen discussed how to identify these species as well. Some of the hawk species that he covered included Red-shouldered, Red-tailed, Swainson’s, American Kestrel, Mississippi Kite, Swallow-tailed kite, Peregrine Falcon, Cooper’s, Sharp-shinned, Broad-winged, and Northern Harrier among others.

Our presenter, Glenn Olsen, leads natural history and birding tours with GOBirding Ecotours to the hottest birding locations in the U.S., exotic locales such as the Galapagos Islands, the Amazon Rainforest, Ecuador, Costa Rica, and Honduras. His tours include aspects of the culture, ecology and natural history of the region. Contact Glenn at h.glenn.olsen@gmail.com or 832-517-2478.

October 1st Chapter Program “Conservation Final Frontier: Cities” by Jaime Gonzalez



There is a rapidly evolving field that goes by several names including urban conservation, civic ecology, One Health, and others. No matter the name, this field is trying to create healthier, more resilient cities for all of its residents – human and wild.

Join The Nature Conservancy in Texas’ Jaime González as he discusses the challenges, opportunities, and vision for this final frontier of conservation and why saving cities is critical so saving local ecosystems.

Jaime González serves as the Houston Urban Conservation Programs Manager for The Nature Conservancy in Texas (TNC). His work at TNC involves building partnerships, and creating and managing projects, to help make Houston a more resilient, biologically diverse, cooler, healthier, and better-connected city. He is one of growing corps of 25 Nature Conservancy city leads working to create healthier cities using nature-based solutions throughout North America. Jaime is program director of [Houston Healthy Cities](#).

This will be a Zoom meeting open to the public. Registration will be required. To find more information about how to connect to the Zoom presentation at <https://txmn.org/coastal/event/conservations-final-frontier-cities/>

FROM FALLOW TO FABULOUS! A Virtual Field Session to Seabourne at the TMN Annual Meeting
By Terri Hurley, TMNCPC Vice President, Photos Greg Hurley



Did you know that we have “Super Stars” in our chapter?! Absolutely! You will be able to see these talented stars in action at the TMN Annual Meeting. We have created a wonderful video that showcases our signature project, the Seabourne Creek Nature Park (SCNP) and it will be shown as one of the five virtual field sessions that will be presented on Tuesday, October 13 at 10:30 am via WebEx. Be sure to be there to support your chapter!

This video presents all major areas of the park and our efforts there over the years and also our future plans. The “stars” of this video are those members who are leaders of each major area at Seabourne. First, our president Bert Stipelcovich was filmed at the main gate, welcoming the viewers and then he takes off in our eight person touring cart and “drives” the audience around the park. Karl Baumgartner then gives the history of our efforts at the park, while standing by the Seabourne Lake. Katie Sallean takes us on a tour of the butterfly garden and talks about larval hostplants and nectar plants. Lynn Trenta shows us around the prairie demo garden and describes each of the habitat beds there. Shannon Westveer talks about the pocket prairie and grasses in the demo garden. Jim Butcher, aka “Grand Poobah”, shows us around the working native plant nursery and describes how we grow thousands of native plants each year that are planted out in the prairie. Of course, he has to tell one of his best jokes! Jerry Trenta is the interpreter in the prairie restoration area as he is driven around by Bert in the touring cart on the prairie loop. Then Karl describes how we created the four acre wetlands from scratch. Bill Johnson leads us on a trip around the bird sanctuary and the bird blind. Then Bert wraps it all up on the floating dock.



Bert Stipelcovich



Karl Baumgartner



Katie Sallean



Lynn Trenta



Shannon Westveer

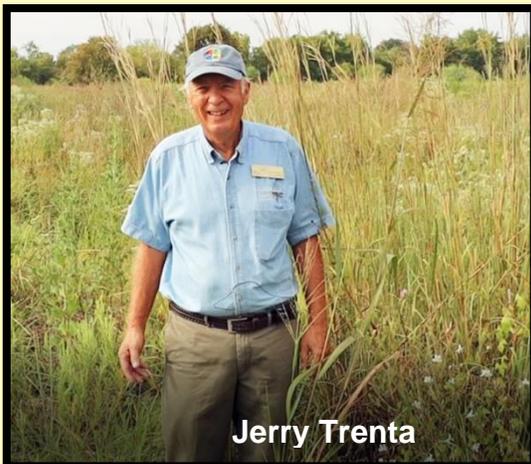
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FROM FALLOW TO FABULOUS! *(Continued)*

Jim Butcher



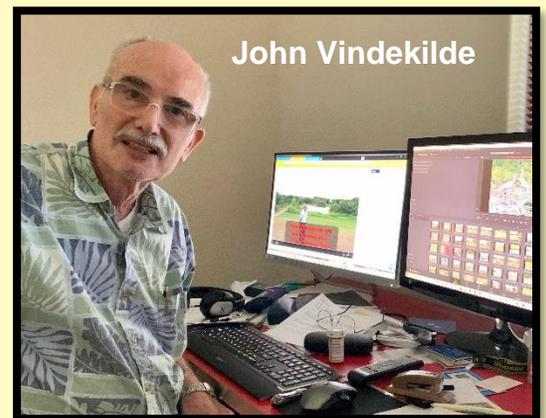
Bill Johnson



Jerry Trenta



Greg Hurley



John Vindkilde

Of course, there are behind the scenes talent who are just as important. Greg Hurley, class of TMNCPC Fall 2020, was the videographer, using his camera with the chapter's new gimbal stabilizer and wireless sound system. Greg stepped up as videographer after Ron Masters, our original videographer, had to drop out due to a broken wrist. John Vindkilde is our film editor and he is currently taking all that raw footage and turning it into a five-star rated one hour movie worthy of an Oscar, if I may say so myself.

And of course, little old me was running around trying to keep our "movie star divas" happy and on-script and the film rolling according to schedule and budget...which is \$0 by the way!

Here is the link to view the details about the virtual field session and our trip to SCNP:

<https://txmn.tamu.edu/2020-virtual-field-sessions-day/>

More details on each virtual field session including ours can be found here:

<https://txmn.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Virtual-Field-Sessions-Day-1.pdf>

You'll need to be registered to view the virtual field sessions, so if you haven't already registered, please do so! You don't want to miss this special day. REGISTER at <https://web.cvent.com/event/d0012216-ad2d-4ae0-9e8b-195d8ad7884d/summary>



Volunteer Service Projects Highlights *By Johanna DeYoung, TMNCPC VSP Director*

Although VSP opportunities continue to be limited due to COVID-19, there remain opportunities that can be completed in your home, in your backyard, and at outdoor locations and events.

On 9/17/2020, Governor Gregg Abbott updated Executive Order GA-28. The following restrictions apply for outdoor events: "CHECKLIST FOR OUTDOOR EVENTS:

- All individuals must wear a face covering (over the nose and mouth) wherever it is not feasible to maintain six feet of social distancing from another individual not in the same household or, for those engaging in physical activities outdoors, wherever the individual is not able to maintain a safe physical distance from others not in the same household.*
- Individuals may not be in a group larger than 10 individuals (including those within the individual's household). Within these groups, individuals should, to the extent possible, minimize in-person contact with others not in the individual's household. Minimizing in-person contact includes maintaining 6 feet of separation from individuals. When maintaining 6 feet of separation is not feasible, other methods should be utilized to slow the spread of COVID-19, such as washing or sanitizing hand frequently, and avoiding sharing utensils or other common objects.*
- Individuals should maintain 6 feet of separation from others outside the individual's group. A group is defined as no more than 10 persons including the members of the household and those persons who traveled together to the event.*
- Wash or disinfect hands after any interaction with employees, other individuals, or items at the outdoor event. Clean and sanitize any items before and after use.*
- Local approval factors: Local approval for large outdoor gatherings (those with an estimated attendance exceeding 10 individuals) is appropriate in this instance because a statewide standard is unable to take into account the various factors needed to ensure such a gathering in varied locations is safe and will minimize the spread of COVID-19. Further, business parity is not an issue at large outdoor events."*

On 9/2/2020, Fort Bend County Judge K. P. George issued a declaration resulting in Fort Bend County moving from a Red Status, "High Community Risk", to an Orange Status, "Moderate - Significant Community Risk". This level involves the following as it applies to the TMNCPC:

- "Avoid and cancel medium (10-250 people) and large public private gatherings (250+).*
- Avoid non-essential business and personal travel.*
- Minimize contact with others, but begin leaving the home for non-essential needs, except medium and large gatherings.*
- Practice social distancing and use face coverings."*

The TMN Coastal Prairie Chapter (TMNCPC) continues to be under the directives issued by Mary Pearl Meuth, TMN Program Assistant State Coordinator, on 3/31/2020. Until Ms Meuth lifts these directives, please refrain from doing non-essential VSP activities at Seabourne Creek Nature Park (SCNP).

VSP Opportunities

- 1) Although the scheduled Seabourne Creek Nature Park (SCNP) Volunteer Days remain on pause, assistance is still needed within SCNP.*

Continued on the next page--

Volunteer Service Projects Highlights *(Continued)*

- a. For bump ups, prairie planting, nursery maintenance, and/or trail maintenance, please contact Jerry Trenta, Seabourne Director (713-898-4769/ jerrytrenta@txtrentas.com), to make arrangements prior to going to SCNP.
- b. For demo garden work please contact Lynn Trenta, (832-646-4769/ lynn@txtrentas.com), to make arrangements prior to going to SCNP.
- c. for bird sanctuary work, please contact Bill Johnson, (281-734-3349/ rxrelo@aol.com), to make arrangements prior to going to SCNP.
- d. For butterfly garden work, please contact Katie Sallean, (713-502-5701/ katy@coastalprairie.org), to make arrangements prior to going to SCNP.

[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under the category “SCNP-7 Habitats Public Access: TMN Report Hours”]

- 1) The TMN’s “Virtual Volunteer Fair”, conducted on 9/2/2020, 9:00 AM – 4:15 PM, was a great success. Volunteer work, completed for one or more of the initiatives presented, can be recorded as VSP opportunities. Currently, as of the release of the October 2020 “Courier”, the means to how to record in VMS is unresolved. Please retain a record of your efforts and plan to input these VSP service hours upon further clarification.

[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS to be determined]

2) Signage for Seabourne Creek Nature Park

Jerry Trenta, SCNP Director, is looking for volunteers to do signage SCNP’s Prairie, Butterfly Garden, Prairie and Habitat Garden, as well as other areas of the park. High resolution photos of prairies and prairie wildlife, and plants (it would be best if chapter members could supply these) are needed. Interested volunteers need to contact Jerry Trenta (713-898-4782/ jerrytrenta@txtrentas.com).

[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under the category “SCNP-7 Habitats Public Access - TMN Report Hours”]

Please continue to check the website calendar, Slack, and the CPCTMN Members Only Facebook page. The TMNCPC members may be unaware of the descriptions of existing VSP opportunities. If there is no existing VSP opportunity that fits a potential VSP opportunity, there is a process to create a new VSP opportunity. Please request and complete an VSP Proposal Form. In turn, the VSP Committee, Terri Hurley, Lynn Trenta, Amy Barta, and me, will review the proposal and determine if it qualifies to become an VSP opportunity.

If you have any questions about VSP opportunities, please contact Johanna DeYoung (832-689-4877/ johanna@coastalprairie.org).



Jane Schnell at the Butterfly Garden



Vicki Broussard Bumping Up at the Prairie Area

Skip the Bee Blocks? – Another Point of View About Bee Houses – Letter to the Editor at the Nature Conservancy Magazine

The letter to the editor of Nature Conservancy Magazine below states a valid point of view about bee houses. When you set up a bee house, you have a responsibility to the bees just as when you put out bird feeders and hummingbird feeders you have a responsibility to the birds. They need to be kept clean.

But the writer of this letter below brings up other good reasons to not put out bee houses. Not only do the houses need to be kept clean, they may actually encourage predators, as the bees are gathering in a common area, unlike in nature when they are scattered in different stems and cavities.

Marney Bruce, Bethesda, MD, Letter to Editor, Nature Conservancy Magazine

“I really appreciated the “Planting for Pollinators” article in the spring issue, but I was distressed when I saw bee blocks promoted. These bee houses are detrimental to the wild bee population because they concentrate bees that would normally nest in lower densities and make it very easy for predators and parasites to take advantage of the situation. I know first-hand because years ago I had bee block houses. They need to be replaced and disinfected regularly, sometimes housing bee tubes elsewhere over the winter. It takes a lot of work to keep the bees and the broods safe, and even then it can be devastating. Large-scale nesting structures should be discouraged and creating a welcoming habitat in the yard encouraged. As your article states, “burrowing bees need patches of dirt that are clear from debris and leaves,” plus a variety of native shrubs and flowering plants.”

Nature Conservancy Editor’s Note: Thank you for sharing these concerns with using bee blocks to support native bee species. The maintenance required can mean the risks outweigh the benefits and your advice to instead make the yard a suitable habitat for pollinators is a safer solution.

See link below to learn how to create a wildscape to support bees and other wildlife.



*Bee House Seabourne Creek Nature Park
Prairie and Habitat Garden-Lynn Trenta*



Bamboo Nests-Xerces



Michael Warriner

Lauren Simpson’s Video on Creating a Wildscape at Your House

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7p89EB9xi5c&fbclid=IwAR0KSDTdaPcwwjbb3ljC2vo4xJBTFezV-r15j4cY0z4HokE6Z_NkYl78dww

Get Ready for Fall Warblers *Sent to Facebook by Robbin Mallett*

Warblers are among the most challenging birds to identify, with their seasonally changing plumages and often-confused songs and calls.

Download eight illustrated plates for free, provided by the authors of *The Warbler Guide*. Use these "Quick Finders" to help you identify any of the 56 species of warblers in the United States and Canada.

Included in This Download: [The Warbler Guide](#)

- Warbler faces
- Side views
- 45° views
- Undertail views
- Warblers by region
- Spring/fall warblers



Hooded Warbler by Pauline Zinn



Worm-eating Warbler by Robbin Mallett

Houston Arboretum Participates in Pollinator Bioblitz

Compiled by Paula Dittrick, TMNCPC blogmaster

Pollinators are a vital part of the ecosystem. The Houston Arboretum participated in this year's Parks for Pollinators BioBlitz, a national campaign to raise awareness and community involvement in the pollinator crisis.

The Parks for Pollinators BioBlitz observations are hosted on iNaturalist during September. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and The Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation asked local parks to get involved.

As of September 29th, there were 614 observations of 172 species of flowering plants and pollinators reported by 35 observers listed on iNaturalist for Parks for Pollinators Houston Arboretum 2020.

The White House's Pollinators Health Task Force reports the United States has experienced an estimated annual 30% decline in pollinators for 30 years, NRPA said. Pollinators include bees, bats, and butterflies.

Citizen-science events, like a BioBlitz, enable community members and park agencies to work together to document, analyze, and protect their local pollinators.



Gulf Fritillary on Passionvine at the Houston Arboretum By Paula Dittrick

Brand New Houston Botanic Garden Brings an Outdoor Wonderland to America's Fourth Largest City 132 Acres of Green and Nature's Creatures by [Shelby Hodge](#) // 09.16.20 Paper City [Houston Botanic Garden](#)

[Hodge](#) // 09.16.20 Paper City [Houston Botanic Garden](#)

Sent via Facebook by Robbin Mallett, TMNCPC Communications Director

The yellow butterflies fluttering through the banks of blue salvia and sunny chrysanthemums anchored along the pathways of Houston Botanic Garden served as nature's welcoming committee as we strolled through the splendid gardens that open to the public on Friday.

Eighteen years since the first seeds of the concept were sewn and nearly two years in construction, the soon-to-be [flourishing garden](#) is probably a growing season or two from full-on perfection. But as gardeners worked feverishly to complete planting edibles and medicinals in the culinary garden and tended to flowering plants only a few days before opening, the effort appeared spectacular.

The 132-acre park gracefully strides [Sims Bayou](#) on land carved from the old [Glenbrook Golf Course](#). With traffic diminished due to COVID-19, it's a quick jaunt down I-45 South to the entrance off of Park Place Boulevard, opposite the freeway from Hobby Airport.

Thanks to the generations-old oak trees, the gently rolling terrain and areas left in their natural state, the park enjoys something of a bucolic nature in addition to its informative themed features. There are eight facets to the park design, each with an educational component.

The Global Collection Garden

Three acres of themed tropical, subtropical and arid zones with 350 species of plants, all of which can flourish in the Houston climate.

The Susan Garver Family Discovery Garden

Showcasing Water Play and Nature Play areas, the garden features an eco-friendly lagoon created from a former golf course water hazard.

The Culinary Garden

Featuring edible plants from the Mediterranean and the Americas and medicinal plants in the Culinary Garden's Apothecary Corner.

Stormwater Wetlands

A natural habitat attracting wildlife while exhibiting how green infrastructure can help with flood control.

Coastal Prairie

A sustainable habitat of prairie grasses and other native species that promotes conservation of soil, water, air and wildlife.

The Pine Grove

Just inside the entry gate, a bevy of towering pines provide shaded spaces with French-inspired tables and chairs for relaxation.

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The cypress-lined boardwalk maze in the Susan Garver Family Discovery Garden. (Photo by Michael Tims)



The lagoon in the Susan Garver Family Discovery Garden is one of many natural attractions in Houston Botanic Garden (Photo by Michael Tims)

Brand New Houston Botanic Garden Brings an Outdoor Wonderland to America's Fourth Largest City *(Continued)*

The Community Garden

According to the Houston Botanic Garden website, this space “will provide bed space, supplies, resources, and classes to allow neighbors to come together to grow organic produce, learn new planting techniques, and deepen their understanding of the nutritional importance of plants.”

The Woodland Glade

This special feature of the garden is shrouded by magnolia trees and flanked by sculpted hedges, which create an open space for special celebrations.

“When you come to the garden, you will be able to enjoy a beautiful natural place with wonderful plants and a gorgeous setting to be outdoors,” says Claudia G. Vassar, Houston Botanic Garden’s president and general counsel. “Also a place for inspiration and education, a place to learn about plants, to be curious about our natural ecosystem and what our part is in order to take care of plants and this beautiful planet.”

“We’ll have experiences for people of all ages, classes for children and adults, for people who are interested in learning about gardening at home, people who would just like to enjoy some wellness outside, or if you want to even get scientific and get deep knowledge about botany and horticulture.”



The Houston Botanic Garden’s Global Collection Garden is populated with 350 varieties of plants. (Photo by Shelby Hodge)



A splashing fountain welcomes visitors just inside the gate the Houston Botanic Garden. (Photo by Shelby Hodge)



University of Wisconsin

The Hidden Carbon Trap in Your Garden?

It's All About the Soil *By Janet Marinelli April 19, 2019 AUDUBON*

Stop tilling, digging, and using conventional fertilizers to preserve carbon-rich dirt. You'll be helping your plants and the atmosphere.

When you think about creating a climate-friendly garden, adding trees and other plants is probably the first thing that comes to mind. But you can also create another kind of backyard carbon bank by increasing the amount of organic matter stored in your soil.

It's a little-known [fact](#) that more carbon is sequestered in the planet's soils than in living plants and the atmosphere combined. Over the past century, however, soil carbon has been widely depleted, mostly due to unsustainable land management practices that disrupt natural processes that create carbon-rich organic matter. One study [estimated](#) that U.S. agricultural soils might have lost between 30 and 50 percent of their original carbon, much of which ended up in the atmosphere in the form of carbon dioxide.

Fortunately, many are recognizing that change is needed. "Today there is a revolution in agriculture that recognizes the importance of building healthy soils by replacing the organic matter that has been lost," says David Wolfe, professor of plant and soil ecology at Cornell University. This new approach is called carbon farming. According to Wolfe, in theory, implementing this method on cultivated lands could slow the pace of global climate change by offsetting as much as one-quarter to one-third of annual increases in atmospheric CO₂ for 20 to 50 years, until soil carbon stocks are once again fully restored. Others have argued that a 5 to 10 percent offset benefit is more realistic, Wolfe adds, "but even those lower numbers are significant."

Soil carbon is the result of interactions among living plants, fungi, bacteria, and other soil organisms.

The same soil conservation measures employed in commercial-scale carbon farming can be adapted for use in your own backyard. The climate mitigation potential of "carbon gardening" is considerable, given the more than [135 million acres](#) of residential land in the country.

Soil carbon is the result of interactions among living plants, fungi, bacteria, and other soil organisms. Through photosynthesis, plants use energy in sunlight to convert carbon dioxide and water to the sugar glucose that they need to survive and grow. Some of this liquid form of carbon, along with amino acids and other compounds, is also secreted by their roots, feeding soil organisms and promoting the production of humus, the dark organic matter that is the foundation of soil fertility. Humus, which is 60 percent carbon, can remain in undisturbed soils for hundreds or even thousands of years before eventually decomposing and releasing its carbon back to the atmosphere. By contrast, the humus in most cultivated soils lasts just a few years or decades.

To rebuild carbon pools on the farm or in the garden, scientists recommend minimizing two conventional practices: intensive tilling of the soil and use of synthetic fertilizers.

Ditch Synthetic Fertilizers

Unlike conventional horticulture, organic gardening eschews the use of synthetic fertilizers, instead nurturing a diverse ecosystem of soil life to naturally support plants. Among other deleterious effects on the climate, overuse of these quick-release nitrogen fertilizers disrupts the interactions between plants and soil creatures.

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The Hidden Carbon Trap in Your Garden? It's All About the Soil

(Continued)

When you spread conventional fertilizer around your plants, scientists say, the sudden megadose of nitrogen causes a burst of activity by soil microorganisms. Once they use up the nitrogen, they gorge on the organic matter in the soil. Over time, this enhanced microbial appetite results in a dramatic reduction of the amount of carbon in the soil.

Weaning your garden from conventional fertilizer is therefore key to restoring soil carbon. Instead, use composted leaves and plant clippings or composted manures, which should supply adequate nutrients for your trees, shrubs, ferns, and perennial wildflowers. Two to four inches of compost is generally applied on garden beds and around woody plants, depending on such factors as soil texture, regional climate, and the type of material you use. The compost should be renewed every year or two. If necessary, sparingly use a slow-release organic amendment—like blood meal or kelp meal—to keep heavy feeders such as vegetables happy.

Growing nitrogen-restoring plants like clovers and legumes as winter cover crops in your vegetable patch is also beneficial. Working with soil bacteria, they pull nitrogen out of the air and turn it into mineral forms that plants can use, providing a natural form of fertilizer while protecting bare ground from erosion and preventing nutrients from leaching out of the soil.

Leave That Dirt Alone

One of the most effective ways to turn your soil into a carbon sink is to do as little as possible to disturb it. Plowing, rototilling, or even digging with a spade or garden fork exposes soil microorganisms to excess oxygen and sunlight, accelerating the loss of stored carbon to the atmosphere.

No-dig gardening is the way to lock up the carbon in your soil instead of destroying it. The particulars of this approach can vary among practitioners, but the basic methodology is the same: dispense with digging as much as possible and instead use organic mulches to prepare planting beds and feed the soil organisms that nourish your plants.

If much of your garden is devoted to permanent plantings of [native](#) trees, shrubs, and perennials, you're already practicing a form of no-till horticulture. One way to care for annual plantings of tomatoes and other vegetables is to adopt the following basic steps, summarized from soil scientist and writer Lee Reich's useful guide, [Weedless Gardening](#):

- *Mow any existing vegetation as low as possible.*
- *Lay down a blanket of newspaper about four sheets thick over the planting bed to smother what's left of the vegetation, overlapping the sheets so there are no holes for weeds to poke through. Wet the paper to keep it in place.*
- *Apply a layer of compost or other organic mulch about one to three inches deep atop the newspaper.*
- *In a week or so, plant seeds or seedlings directly into the mulch, being careful to disturb as little soil as possible.*
- *Renew the mulch as necessary to keep the soil nourished and suppress weeds.*

When you become a carbon gardener, you not only create a climate-friendly landscape with a diversity of soil creatures for ground-feeding birds and other wildlife. There's also a nice bonus: By eliminating tedious digging and reducing weeding, you make your own life easier, too.

In Our Own Backyards and Other Places

From My Kitchen Window *Photos and Text by Diane Eismont*

If you put out hummingbird feeders, have you ever noticed that, in this hot, dry weather, hummingbirds aren't the only birds that enjoy hummingbird feeders? Other types of birds like to drink from the ant moats filled with clean water.

The first picture shows two birds taking turns. A Tufted Titmouse is ready for his drink & a Carolina Chickadee is waiting next in line. Then takes his turn! A female Northern Cardinal also joins in!



In Our Own Backyards and Other Places *(Continued)*

Girl Scouts Build Firepit at Baumgartner's Edna Property

Photos Sent in by Karl Baumgartner



In Our Own Backyards and Other Places *(Continued)*



Amy and her 2 daughters were out to help at Seabourne, bumping plants last month

A Blast From the Past



This photo was taken at the newly installed butterfly garden at Seabourne Nature Park in 2010. Kathy Moore, Linda Rippert, Jim Butcher, Teresa Bailey, Karl Baumgarten, Don Johnson, and Jimmie Branson are in the photo.

A Blast From the Past *(Continued)*



Prairie Heritage Festival 2015



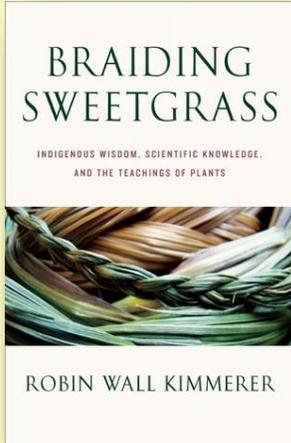
Susie Doe's Plant Walk 2015

Here are some photos from years gone by. The upper right photo is at Prairie Heritage Festival. Pictured are Jim Butcher, Jamie Fairchild, Sharon Smith, Donna Pisani, and Karl Baumgartner.

Susie Doe is leading a plant walk at Seabourne. In 2015 in the bottom photo and Karl Baumgartner, Margo Johnson, Glenda Norwood, Susie Doe, and Vicki Poorman are pictured.

Please send in photos you want to share with the chapter about events occurring 1 year or more ago to lynn@txtrentas.com

The Book Corner



Braiding Sweetgrass

Robin Wall Kimmerer

**Recommended by
Jaime Gonzalez**

**A New York Times Bestseller
A Washington Post Bestseller
Named a "Best Essay Collection of the Decade" by Literary Hub**

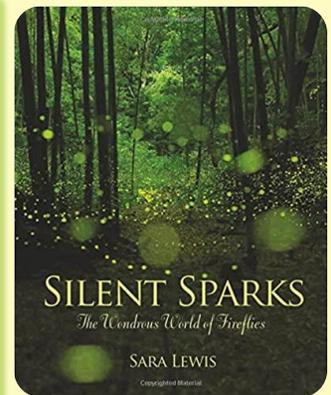
As a botanist, Robin Wall Kimmerer has been trained to ask questions of nature with the tools of science. As a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, she embraces the notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. In Braiding Sweetgrass, Kimmerer brings these two lenses of knowledge together to take us on "a journey that is every bit as mythic as it is scientific, as sacred as it is historical, as clever as it is wise" (Elizabeth Gilbert).

Drawing on her life as an indigenous scientist, and as a woman, Kimmerer shows how other living beings—asters and goldenrod, strawberries and squash, salamanders, algae, and sweetgrass—offer us gifts and lessons, even if we've forgotten how to hear their voices. In reflections that range from the creation of Turtle Island to the forces that threaten its flourishing today, she circles toward a central argument: that the awakening of ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world. For only when we can hear the languages of other beings will we be capable of understanding the generosity of the earth, and learn to give our own gifts in return.

For centuries, the beauty of fireflies has evoked wonder and delight. Yet for most of us, fireflies remain shrouded in mystery: How do fireflies make their light? What are they saying with their flashing? And what do fireflies look for in a mate? In Silent Sparks, noted biologist and firefly expert Sara Lewis dives into the fascinating world of fireflies and reveals the most up-to-date discoveries about these beloved insects. From the meadows of New England and the hills of the Great Smoky Mountains, to the rivers of Japan and mangrove forests of Malaysia, this beautifully illustrated and accessible book uncovers the remarkable, dramatic stories of birth, courtship, romance, sex, deceit, poison, and death among fireflies.

The nearly two thousand species of fireflies worldwide have evolved in different ways—and while most mate through the aerial language of blinking lights, not all do. Lewis introduces us to fireflies that don't light up at all, relying on wind-borne perfumes to find mates, and we encounter glow-worm fireflies, whose plump, wingless females never fly. We go behind the scenes to meet inquisitive scientists who have dedicated their lives to understanding fireflies, and we learn about various modern threats including light pollution and habitat destruction. In the last section of the book, Lewis provides a field guide for North American fireflies, enabling us to identify them in our own backyards and neighborhoods. This concise, handy guide includes distinguishing features, habits, and range maps for the most commonly encountered fireflies, as well as a gear list.

A passionate exploration of one of the world's most charismatic and admired insects, Silent Sparks will inspire us to reconnect with the natural world.

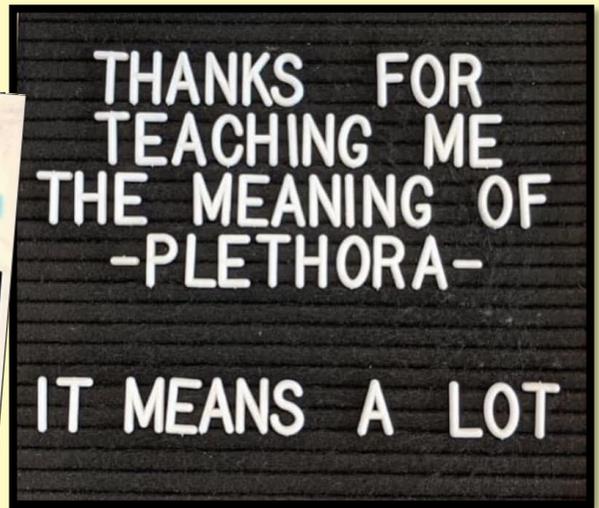


Silent Sparks

Sara Lewis

Recommended by Ben Pfeiffer who spoke about fireflies at NPSOT's Wildscapes in September

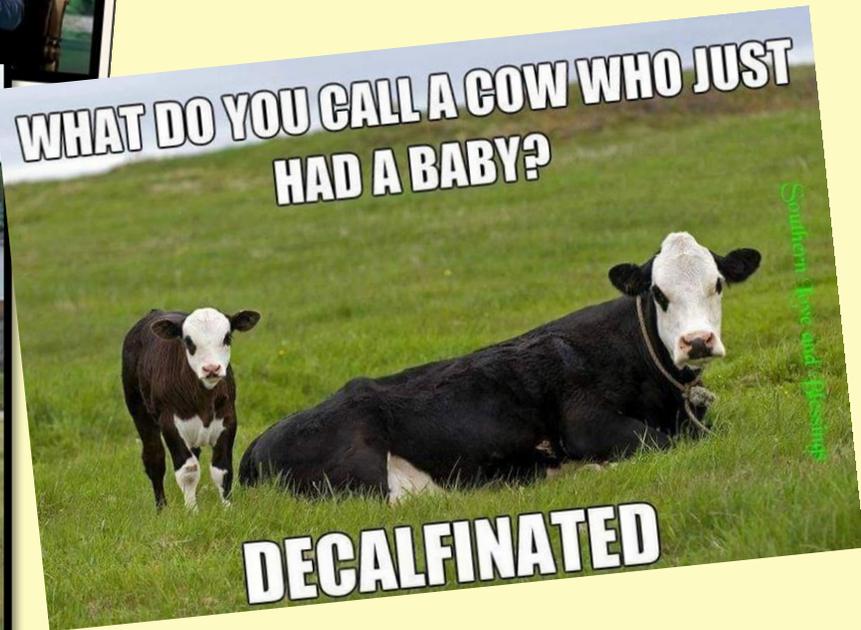
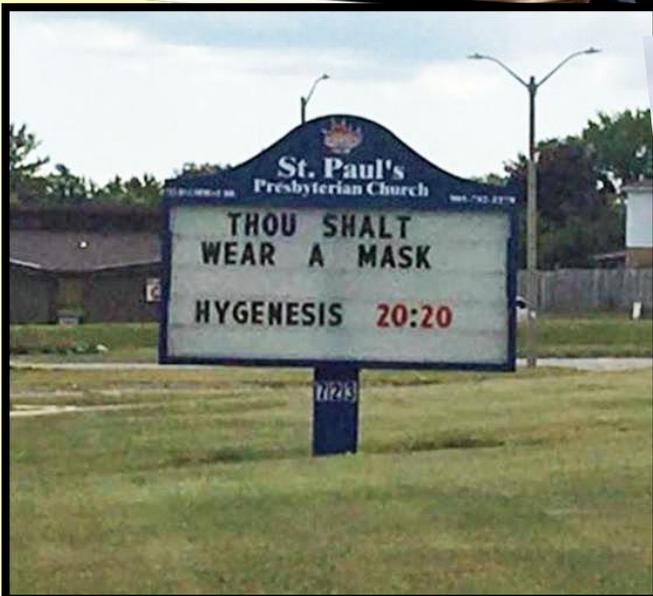
The Lighter Side



John Donaho (Facebook)



Ramona Ridge (Facebook)



Julie Gentry (Facebook)

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We are on the Web!

See us at:

www.coastalprairie.org



Wayne Poorman (above) & Pauline Zinn (below)



Our Chapter Facebook Page is at



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To post photos and information, email

[Robbin Mallett](#)

Also, share our chapter Facebook entries with your friends on your Facebook Page

We also have a **Chapter-Only** Facebook Page that allows chapter members to post items. You can join by going to the website below and clicking on "Join". The administrator will allow you access. This is for chapter members only.

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1402 Band Rd
Extension Office
Rosenberg, TX 77471—8678
Phone: 281-633-7033

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