

# Opportunities Update

## Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition 2015



Master Naturalists Shari Brand, Shay Shepherd, Marilyn Blanton, Dorothy Thetford and Sandy Stickane

The Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition 2015 will be on display at the Blagg-Huey Library at TWU now through January. The artwork has already been displayed at the Denton Senior Center and the Good Samaritan-Denton Village.



Photos from Marilyn Blanton and Dorothy Thetford

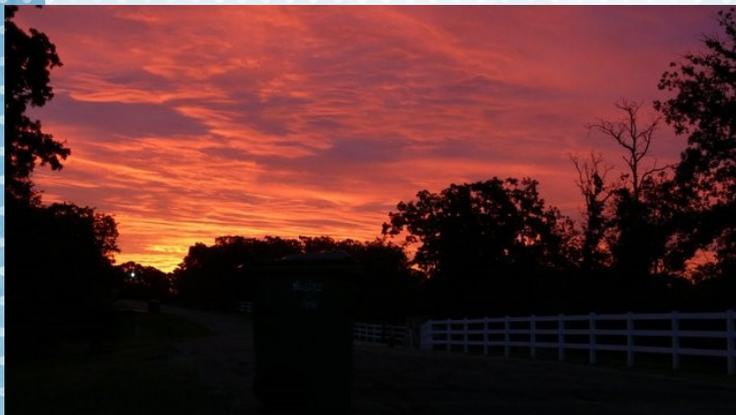


## Teaming up at Clear Creek



Lopper team at Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center: Dave Rowley, Jonathan Smith and Jonathan Reynolds — photo from J. Reynolds

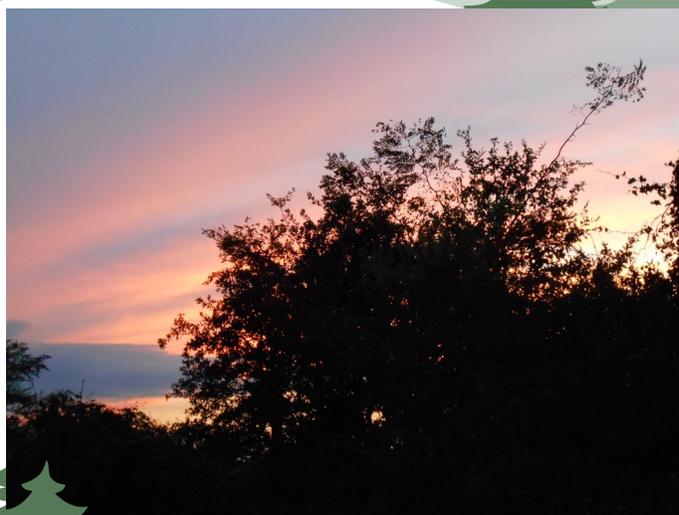
# From the album



*Sunrise—from Susan Pohlen*



*Hermit Thrush striking a pose for guest contributor,  
Ken Agee—from Jan Hodson*



*Sunset — from Dorothy Thetford*

# Read and Learn

## POSSUMHAW

Article and photo by Dorothy  
Brown Thetford

**Common names:** Deciduous holly, Winterberry

**Scientific name:** *Ilex decidua*

**Family:** Aquifoliaceae (Holly family)

Are you looking for the gift that remains special long after the giving, always brings memories of the donor, is appreciated year after year, and is a native of Texas? How about a Christmas gift found in your local nursery...a small tree from the holly family, commonly called Possumhaw (*Ilex decidua*).

Possumhaw is capable of adapting to a wide range of soils and conditions. Hollies grow in abundance in the eastern and southeastern portions of Texas; the few survivors of thievery in this area are found along fencerows, edges of woods, and creek embankments. This shrub or small tree (to 32 feet) grows well in full or partial sun.

Inconspicuous, small, greenish-white flowers bloom in the spring, with staminate and pistillate flowers occurring on separate plants. The leaves are 1 1/2 inches long by 3/4 inch wide, and deciduous, which allows the main attraction to be truly appreciated when the leaves drop.

The main attraction is not its flower, but its fruit. Berries of the female Possumhaw are 1/4 inch diameter, bright red to orange colored, and grow or cluster closely to the stems. As leaves drop in early winter, berries are exposed for their magnificent display. However, even though they are extremely attractive, they are poisonous to mankind and are known to cause vomiting, diarrhea and stupor if eaten in quantity. But, the berries are considered an important food source for our native birds. Each berry contains four to eight seeds.



## POSSUMHAW cont'd

Since Denton county is on the western fringe of Possumhaw's natural growing habitat, supplemental watering is suggested to assist with the moist soil requirements. Thus, every irrigated landscape could be enhanced by this native plant. It's easily conceivable that all city intersections, parks, schools, churches, commercial and residential properties could be naturally and natively decorated for the winter holidays! Case in point, check the fruiting Possumhaw trees in the median on Fort Worth Drive between Collins Street and I-35E intersection. Our gratitude goes to Tony Lucido, Landscape Architect, TxDOT-Dallas office, for incorporating this wonderful native tree for public awareness and enjoyment in this very visual public design.

Now is the time to check local nurseries for Possumhaw. If you want the gorgeous berry display, be sure to buy the female tree, and make selection while berries are still on the tree to assure that you get the color that you prefer.

Search no more. Merry Christmas!

Dorothy Thetford, a certified Master Naturalist (class of 2001), and past president of Trinity Forks Chapter of NPSOT, was recently recognized by MN Elm Fork Chapter for her 4,000 Volunteer Hours Milestone of service to the community.

*This article, perfect for the Holiday Season, first appeared in NN February 2011, and with some updating by Dorothy, it is again printed for your enjoyment.*

