**Park West**

Park West is Seguin’s new 47-acre public park where Guadalupe Master Naturalists are enhancing outdoor appreciation through forest improvement and nature interpretation.  We hold volunteer workdays there to remove exotic vegetation. Currently, bamboo and ligustrum dominate much of the understory.  The old live oaks, pecans and cedar elms are being crowded and starved by the alien plants.  An initial walk-though survey found almost no young trees sprouting in the dark shade of the exotic plants. The forested areas of the park are not enhanced by a degraded landscape.  If nothing is done to remove the foreign invaders, our native forest with all its botanical diversity, birds, wildlife and botanical beauty will be lost.

Master Naturalist volunteers begin by marking with yellow tape all native plants to be saved, regardless of size. The most abundant native trees are cedar elm, anaqua, persimmon, hackberry and live oak*.* The most abundant native shrubs are elbowbush, agarita and condalia*.*

On volunteer workdays, with participation from Master Gardeners, Native Plant Society of Texas and Nogales Garden Club in addition to Master Naturalists, exotic trees and shrubs are cut to within six inches of the ground and the stump treated with a donated herbicide. Chemical herbicide and training are provided by Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension.  Volunteers cut trees and shrubs with loppers and saws. The City of Seguin Parks Department provides city employees to operate chain saws. On university-wide service days, Texas Lutheran University students help by hauling cut timber to piles where the city chips them into mulch.

A nature trail loop about 1 mile long has been cut and marked through the timber and brush.  Approximately 4 acres have been cleared of exotic trees, shrubs, vines and poison ivy. The Forest Health Improvement project was the subject of a front-page story in the *Gazette-Enterprise* on July 8, 2015. At the Park West Grand Opening on Sept. 30, 2015 the Guadalupe Master Naturalists were recognized for our efforts by Parks Director Jack Jones.  On Saturday, October 3, the first weekend of the park’s opening, we held a community education event on the new Park West Nature Trail. We were pleased that 26 adults and 10 children walked the trail with 9 Master Naturalist volunteers that day.

Volunteer workdays are announced by email. Wear gloves, long sleeves, long pants, a hat and closed-toe shoes. Bring water and tools. For more information or to volunteer, contact Monta Zengerle at <zengerlem@sbcglobal.net>