



Mission. To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.

Update from President Tom

"Well, the year started off pretty good. We had several members of Class 2019 certify, we did a lot of work on the bird blind at SOLC, had Discovery programs at the Seguin Library and Crescent Bend, and had a great workshop on using iNaturalist presented by Craig Hensley, to name a few. Then things started getting a little rough. We have had to cancel Discovery programs, canceled our monthly meetings for March and April, there have been no school trips at SOLC for us to interact with, and have had our planning for Class 2020 seriously interrupted, not to mention cancelling Walk With a Naturalist and the Park West Forest Initiative.

But keep your chins up, I'm sure things will get to looking better soon. And I hope we will be able to have our May meeting. As you know, we don't have meetings in June and July, I would hate to miss our May meeting as well. I miss all of you, and can't wait to see you soon!"

News from Jeff

we will open the doors to the Extension office at 8 a.m. Monday May 4th with limited foot traffic. I would like to also let you know that there will not be any in person meetings held in the month of May. Hopefully we can begin face to face meetings in June with limited numbers. Let me know if you have any questions or need anything.

Jeff Hanselka

CEA-NR

Guadalupe County

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ADVANCED TRAINING

Weekly Webinars from **Bexar County AgriLife Extension Service**

Horticulturist David Rodriguez and Entomologist Molly Keck are joining forces to provide a weekly plants and bugs webinar series. Join us to learn about your landscape and the insects that could wreak havoc on it! **Every Tuesday and Wednesday in May @ 1-2 p.m. central time. Plus, a few bonus webinars! All webinars start @ 1:00 p.m.** To join, go to the Bexar County AgriLife Extension website <https://bexar-tx.tamu.edu/> at the date and time of the presentation.

BONUS WEBINAR!

Make Mother's Day Great!

May 5 – Great Plant Gifts for Mother's Day

May 6 – What's Eating Mama's Plants?

BONUS WEBINARS!

May 7 – Butterfly Gardening Host Plants

May 8 – Butterfly Gardening Nectar Plants

I would think the programs on May 7 and 8 would be eligible for Advanced Training time. Don't know about May 5 and 6 since they are mainly gardening topics. Need a ruling from Cinde!

→ If you are aware of other webinars, please send information to me at MarilynA@access4less.net and I will distribute to our members.

A LOOK AT AMERICAN FORESTS

By David Benbow



Texas Master Naturalists love trees. I hope we are all in agreement on that. One of my favorite tree and forest web-sites is American Forests. They are easily located on the internet by Googling www.americanforests.org.

American Forests has a long history going back to their foundation in 1875. I won't bore you with the details, but if you are interested, you can find all you want under the About Us heading.

What does this organization do, and why? You can find out under their self-explanatory heading of "What We Do." The four main thrusts of their efforts are (1) Restoration of Forest Landscapes (2) Advance Forest Policy (3) Create Tree Equity. (4) Programs and Projects - other nationwide projects to further the aims of A.F.

For those who might be confused by the term "Create Tree Equity," it is the recognition by the American Forests group that (in their words) "there are dramatic disparities in tree canopy that track on economic lines...low-income neighborhoods can have a fraction of the tree canopy found in more affluent areas." American Forests is responding to this challenge through their "Community Re-Leaf Program." Much more interesting information on this subject can be found on the web-site.

My favorite part of the site is the National Register of Champion Trees section, which is found under the heading of "Get Involved." Now, you might ask, what makes a champion tree? How is a champion tree judged? Well, for champion trees, size really does matter. In fact, size is pretty much all that matters. Championship awards are based on a points system which consists of three different dimensions: (1) height of tree (2) circumference of trunk (or bole) and (3) spread of crown. The formula to calculate points goes like this:

Trunk Circumference (in inches) + Height (in feet) + $\frac{1}{4}$ Average Crown Spread (in feet).

For example; the national champion Cedar Elm *Ulmus crassifolia*, located in Missouri, has a circumference of 139 inches, a height of 97 feet, and an average crown spread of 50 feet. This calculates as $139 + 97 + \frac{1}{4}(50) = 249$ points (rounded up.) The Texas champion has 227 points.

This formula may sound simple enough, but tree measurement can get pretty complicated; enough so that American Forests includes an 86 page manual on the details of tree measurement. This manual is found in the Nominate a Tree section. And, anyone can nominate a tree if they think it might qualify as a champion. In fact, we are told that there are many species of trees in the U.S. that do not have a designated champion. So, get busy!

As you would expect, the grand champion tree in the U.S. is a Giant Sequoia, located in Tulare Co, California. This tree's measurements give it a total of 1321 points. In comparison, the national champion Live Oak, *Quercus virginiana*, is located in Georgia and clocks in at 521 points.

This site also details several projects in progress; some of which are located in Texas and might qualify as Volunteer Opportunities. Check with the TMN authorities to verify this.

By the way, Texas claims 72 national champions within its borders. Source; Big Tree Registry, at texasforestinfo.tamu.edu/BigTreeRegistry.

One more thing, their search menu is tricky. I prefer the pdf which lists every tree in alphabetical sequence by scientific name.

CURRENT GUIDELINES FROM STATE OFFICE

You are encouraged to read the policies below for changes in Master Naturalist requirements.

Current Guidelines for Texas Master Naturalist Chapters

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department are statewide sponsors of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. As such we must adhere to the policies set forth by both of our sponsoring agencies.

- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension has mandated that ALL AgriLife face to face events, programs and meetings be **cancelled through May 31st** at the earliest.
- This includes Texas Master Naturalist face to face events, programs and meetings.
- Because the period may well be extended, all TMN chapters should continue to make contingency plans for no face-to-face events through the summer out of an abundance of caution.
- <https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/coronavirus/> - a resource page for updates

Certification Requirements – 2020 Events & Situations

■ The mission of the Texas Master Naturalist Program is to *develop a corps of **well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service** dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.*

–Key Tenets of our Program – are a ‘Masters’-level Basic Training & Volunteer Service

- The requirement for a full 40 hours of Basic Training and 40 hours of Volunteer Service **will not be changed** for 2020.
- Exceptions will be made for Advanced Training in 2020 as described below, but 8 hours minimum will still be required.

Advanced Training Annual Requirements – 2020 INTERIM POLICY

- Online-based training and webinars will accepted for **all of the minimum of 8 hours** of advanced training hours required for certification. Additional AT hours can be earned through distance or in person courses once shutdown lifted.
- We encourage members to consider attending in person advanced trainings in the fall once travel & health restrictions lift.
- We encourage chapters to host multi-chapter or regional advanced training webinars/online programs to limit stress on presenters.

- We encourage the priority of those online training/webinars that are live, allow for speaker/audience interaction and allow for questions/discussion at the end.
- We encourage chapters to host post-training discussion groups if speaker isn't available for questions/discussion.
- We encourage limits to those advanced trainings that are pre-recorded, not live or not interactive in their online format. **No "learning by YouTube"**.

Volunteer Service Requirements – 2020 Events & Situations

■ There will be **no change in the minimum requirements for volunteer service** for certification/recertification in 2020

■ But there are some options to switch to distance service:

–Write a newsletter article spotlighting a local SGCN species or make a presentation to give in the fall.

–Verify or assist with curating observations in iNaturalist or eBird * (*more guidance on CitSci volunteer service coming soon.)

– Contributing to the chapters blog/newsletter

– Planning your chapter's 20th anniversary events/celebration/etc.

– Planning for fall trainings, ATs and projects

– Grant writing

– Updating chapter websites

– Updating chapter brochures and outreach materials

– Reviewing/making comments to the TMN bylaws, CMOP and COH documents for possible considerations to state program office should consider for 2020 updates.

– Join a planning committee for the TMN Annual Meeting and events.

– Assist leadership with managing your chapter, going through and organizing chapter files whether they are electronic or paper files.

■ Encourage your members to share their service ideas with us to share across the state!

■ **IMPORTANT NOTE** – ALL volunteer service MUST meet local and federal guidelines for limited travel and social distancing. Local Guidelines currently vary city to city and county to county.

– Some considerations – We encourage members to limit engaging in service at parks, nature centers, gardens even if following distancing and cleaning guidelines – consider your travel there (i.e stopping at a gas station) or the potential safety situations when working by yourself at a remote site. It is strongly recommended that these types of service be limited out of an abundance of caution and are not required to complete under social distancing restrictions.

Training Class News

The committee continues to work toward the August 11 class start date. Prayers going up the COVID-19 will be under control to the extent we can start on the scheduled date.

Committee members continue to work toward that goal. The AiLife buuilding is opening up so I will be getting applications to the lobby this coming week. **We encourage you to share class information and the application with contacts you feel would be interested; a copy is attached to this email.**

Nancy will be having copies of the new promotional flier printed. We will send a notice when they are available for distribution. **Please help spread the word** by posting a flier at locations you frequent.

Bringing in new members is one of the most satisfying aspects of the Master Naturalist program. The Committee looks forward to an exciting new class this Fall.



Kay Robbins Serving as Volunteer at Garner State Park

Here is what she had to say:

I am staying on at Garner State Park as a volunteer host and volunteer Naturalist until mid-May. I have very limited internet access here, but I wanted to send a few pictures of the Native Plant Garden I work in. I also maintain the Bird Blind, but the health and safety restrictions here have limited our activities.

I'm sorry I've missed GMN activities, especially the completion of the bird viewing area at ILSOLC. Be well all,



This is the shortest newsletter ever!

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Please send announcements and news items for distribution in the newsletter to Marilyn Anderson, MarilynA@access4less.net.

Deadline for next issue – Friday, May 29 for the June 2020 edition.

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The Texas Master Naturalist program is sponsored by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife

