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The Texas Star

Newsletter of the Texas Master Naturalist
Hill Country Chapter

T E X A S



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November Chapter Meeting

The November Hill Country Chapter meeting will be held on Monday, November 25. Doors will open at 6:00 pm for light refreshments. The business meeting will begin at 6:30 and the presentation at 7:00.

Our speakers will be Sheryl Pender and Billy Guin, who will talk about the Pollinator Garden Assistance Program (PGARP) and the Land Management Assistance Program (LMAP). For more information, please see Alice King's article on page 3.

Zoom attendance: Prior registration is required for attending the meeting/Advanced Training session via Zoom. To register for virtual attendance, click [HERE](#) You will receive a confirmation email with information about joining the meeting. You can then log into Zoom starting at 6:00 pm on November 25th.

If you are attending in person, the location is at Guadalupe Basin Natural Resource Center (GBNRC). 125 Lehman Dr. Kerrville. There is no need to pre-register.

President's Message ... Jeff Schwarz

It's All Downhill From Here

We're quickly coming to a close of the year for the chapter! My second time around was much easier than the first as I could hit the ground running and half of the board was also in their second year.

Now it is time to fill the chapter Board Officer positions for 2025. The slate of Officers listed below will be presented to the chapter members for their approval at the November 25th chapter meeting. There will be an opportunity for nominations from the floor prior to a voice vote from members in attendance and on Zoom.

- President: Sheryl Pender, class of 2019
- Vice President: Phillip Youngblood, class of 2021
- Treasurer: Maria Lozano, class of 2024
- Secretary: Diane DeKerlegand, class of 2024

See **Downhill**, page 2



Downhill

(continued from page 1)

I am excited about the slate of officers being presented! Sheryl was the Class Director for my class of 2021, Phillip was one of my brightest class of 2021 classmates, and two members of our newest class, Maria and Diane, are already stepping up into chapter leadership roles! Maria and Diane are two of many of the class of 2024 who obtained their initial certifications at their class launch.

The Director positions on the Board will be appointed by the 2025 chapter President. There are a few directors ready to stay over for a second year. I'm excited to see this as it ensures a smooth transition of the board.

Thank you to all members, past and present, of the Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program! The Covid years are in the rearview mirror, and we are finishing the year on the upswing. Because of a decline in attrition over the last two years and the incoming new class members, our number of active members in 2024 stands at 233, a 16% increase over 2022! We are closing in on the record number of active members that occurred in 2018 at 241 members.

The Hill Country Chapter continues to be a leader among the 49 statewide Master Naturalist Programs. Hill Country Chapter members have volunteered more than 500,000 hours since being established in 2002. Only the Galveston Bay Area Chapter, formed in 2001, has more volunteer hours at more than 660,000!

Keep up the good work, and maybe, for the last time, you'll hear this from me in my capacity as chapter President, PLEASE LOG THOSE VOLUNTEER HOURS INTO VMS!!! The Alamo Chapter is nipping at our heels as the 2nd most active chapter statewide, and we wouldn't want to lose our position to SAN ANTONIO! (Over the last five years, the number of logged hours in VMS for the Galveston Bay Area, Hill Country and Alamo chapters was 203,273 hours, 157,197 hours and 140,209 hours, respectively.)

I hope to see you in person on November 25th at the GBNRC auditorium (Guadalupe Basin Natural Resources Center, 125 Lehmann Drive, Kerrville) for the chapter meeting and Advanced Training session.

Jeff Schwarz

The Pollinator Garden Assistance and Recognition Program (PGARP) and the Land Management Assistance Program (LMAP)

BY ALICE KING

This presentation will highlight two examples of excellence in the Hill Country Texas Master Naturalist direct outreach services: Our PGARP and LMAP programs. These two unique Hill Country chapter services are volunteer-driven, are growing, and offer hands-on consultation to private landowners, municipal parks/buildings, and non-profit groups. Learn about how each program works and how anyone can request the service. Gain insights on how we can talk with ranchers, property owners and gardeners regarding cedar, improving/restoring the soil, invasive plants, erosion, and subdivision lawns (among other topics!) without being critical or adversarial. You are invited to bring your tips and advice to share about how you have successfully influenced family, friends, and neighbors in a positive direction.

About Our Speaker(s): Sheryl Pender (Class of 2019) will lead the presentation for PGARP and Billy Guin (also class of 2019) will lead the presentation for LMAP. Sheryl has been a Hill Country resident since 2017 and is active in her neighborhood association at Tierra Linda as well as playing a key role in the New Class since she served as the New Class Director in 2021. Billy and his wife Patti (also a Hill Country TMN member) settled near Fredericksburg in 2018 and have been working actively since then to steward their land for the benefit of the soil, water and wildlife.

This Month We Honor:

RECERTIFICATIONS

Richard Adams, Jean Bodine, Jill Boyter, Nancye Drukker, Becky Etzler, Mary Frushour, Dot Garlow, Paula Harley, Carra Milikien, Linda Miller, Darryl Pitts, Glenn Randow, Sam Roberts, Andrew Robinson, Phil Stapleton, Rebecca Stapleton

MILESTONES

250 Hours: Laura King, Patrick Scoggins
1000 Hours: Mark Hults

Congratulations to members who received awards at the October chapter meeting:



Recertifications:
Rheda Boardman, David Drake



250 Hours:
Aimee Tennant, Randee Thompson



500 Hours:
Kathy Loring



2500 Hours:
Lisa Flanagan



4000 Hours:
Tara Randle
(shown with President, Jeff Schwarz)

OOPS!



SINCERE APOLOGIES TO ROBIN MAY: HER NAME WAS INCORRECTLY PUBLISHED IN THE OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

Recertifications: (left to right)
Jane Jamison, Phil Youngblood, Eldon Sheffer, Bob Binney, **Robin May**, John Walker

2024 *Class of* 24

CONGRATULATIONS!

INITIAL CERTIFICATIONS

Dean DeKerlegand, Diane DeKerlegand, Steve Griffith, Devin Hayes,
Karen Hurst, Maria Lozano, Clark Terrell

SPECIAL CERTIFICATION

Clark Terrell



**THE 2024
CLASS!**

**GOODBYE!!
TEMPORARY
NAME TAGS**





The raffle table: Barbara Romano, Carla Stang, Maura Windlinger



Michelle Haggerty



The dessert table

**2024 Class
Launch and
Volunteer
Appreciation
Day**



Seed Sale! Michael McCrea, Patricia Poore, Lucy Cruz-Hudson



New Class Rep: Kathy Crawford



Bake Off Entries



Initial Certifications: Karen Hurst, Devin Hayes, Steve Griffith, Maria Lozano, Clark Terrell (Clark also received the Special Certification).
Not pictured: Dean & Diane DeKerlegand

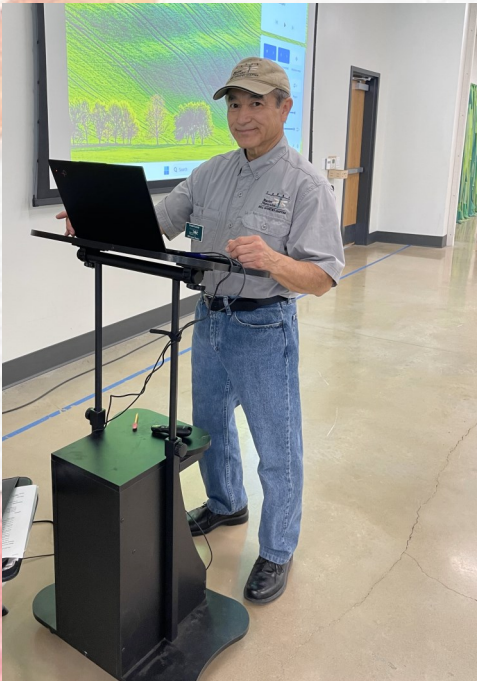


New Class Committee: Carra Milikien, Randee Thompson, Vicki Andrews, Sheryl Pender, Lou Hugman, Julie Lewis, Aimee Tennant, Selina Keeton



New Class with their mentors

**2024 Class Launch
and Volunteer
Appreciation Day**



Frank Garcia



Merchandise Table—with Gracie Waggener



Chris & Greg Walton



**Aimee Tennant,
Vicki Andrews, Julie Lewis**



Lou Hugman, Dot Maginot, Carla Stang, Selina Keeton

START PLANTING NOW FOR THE *Spring* PLANT SALE!

BY CARLA STANG

The Spring plant sale is scheduled for April 19, 2025.* For this upcoming sale, the Plant Sale committee is asking for your help in growing your own native plants and donating them for the sale (vs. purchasing them from our usual nursery suppliers).

We started requesting donated plants in the spring of 2024 and we'd like to increase this effort for 2025. We'd like to sell donated plants grown by our talented Texas Master Naturalists, Native Plant Society of Texas members and Riverside Nature Center.

Now is a good time to start growing native plants from seeds or pot seedlings you've dug up from your property. This will give them a healthy root system to be ready to sell in the spring. Please contact me at stangs94@outlook.com if you have any questions.

Thank you!

* Come out and buy some native plants that'll help you get your landscaped property providing food, nectar, and habitat for the various insects, birds, and critters of the Hill Country.

Two methods for propagating plants

BY KATHY WEBSTER

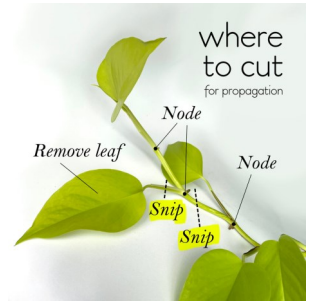
Transplant Method: Many plants re-seed easily. Dig up these babies and transplant into one gallon pots in the fall. Over the winter they will appear to die but actually they are going dormant and working to develop a good root system. Put all the pots, sides touching, under an evergreen tree for the winter, such as Ashe Juniper or Mountain Laurel. Water about once every week in the winter. Around Valentine's Day, cut off the dead stems and leaves just above the dirt and they will come out beautifully once the weather warms up. Some species that re-seed easily and quickly adjust to being moved to a pot include: Salvia coccinea, Mealy blue sage, Golden groundsel, Fall aster, Fall Obedient plant, Flame acanthus, Lyre-leaf sage, Purple coneflower, Black-eyed susan, Rock rose and Gregg's blue mistflower are good examples.



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Cuttings Method: Some other species don't seem to re-seed: Blackfoot daisy, Autumn sage, Coral honeysuckle, Western white honeysuckle, Crossvine, Texas lantana, Wright's skullcap and Texas Betony are good examples, as well. For these species, you may need to propagate them from cuttings. Prepare a pot of well-draining soil, then take a 6-inch cutting from the plant (soft tissue stems seem to do better than woody stems). Dip the soft stems into water and then rooting powder (available from WalMart or any nursery), then insert 2 or 3 inches of the powder-covered stem into the prepared soil. Keep it moist but not overly saturated. Pots with cuttings can also be grouped under an evergreen tree for the winter as described above.



When growing plants from transplants or from cuttings, it's important to keep the pot in a protected area, not in full sun. Even species that love full sun do better in shade while they are getting established. Once they have a well-developed root system, then you can gradually increase how much sun exposure they have.

For species-specific instructions on growing Hill Country native plants, consult Jill Nokes' book, *"How to Grow Native Plants of Texas and the Southwest."*

Passing the Torch

BY CARLA STANG

It is with great regret that I pass along the news that one of the stalwarts of our organization, Sharon Hixson, is retiring from leading the plant sales. Sharon is someone who has made a monumental impact in building our community's awareness and appreciation of native plants. You may have attended one of many talks she has given here and at various other locations; each imparting a similar message of the benefits of planting and propagating native plants. Sharon wears many organizational hats: Native Plant Society of Texas, Texas Master Naturalist, and Riverside Nature Center volunteer. For the past 10 years, Sharon has captained both the spring and fall native plant sales. She has led a team of dedicated volunteers with patience, experience, and keen understanding. Her mentorship has reached its zenith and she is passing the torch. ‘

Sharon, it is with great admiration and respect that we say farewell to you as our plant sale team leader. It's time to enjoy the fruits of your labor and just be a buyer. THANK YOU!



Leave the Leaves!

LET NATURE TAKE THE LEAD—LEAVE THE LEAVES FOR A BETTER FALL FOR ALL!



WHY LEAVE THE LEAVES?

- Shelter for Wildlife
- Free fertilizer
- Non-native weed suppression

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Rake into flowerbeds
- Mulch your garden
- Add to your compost pile



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<https://www.greensavesgreen.org/>

Fall in the Hill Country Like a Second Spring



After the recent passing of one of the founding members, Jim Stanley, of the Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter, The Texas Star was given permission to publish a series of essays written by Jim Stanley. Following is the first, of hopefully many, that will continue his legacy of providing information about his love and respect for the Texas Hill Country.

An excerpt from “*Hill Country Ecology: Essays on Plants, Animals, Water and Land Management*”
BY JIM STANLEY

This year, most of us were fortunate enough to have good spring rains, adequate summer rains and welcome September showers — a huge contrast to last year when we endured the worst single year drought in a hundred years.

This spring and early summer we were fortunate in having spectacular drifts of native wildflowers just about everywhere, some of which were of species and numbers not seen in years. Again, a huge contrast with the previous year.

Right now it seems like everything is responding to the September rains. I have even seen the rare sight of an oak tree putting out new leaves the first week in October!

I took a pad of paper and walked around our yard recording the things that were blooming right now. The following are my lists.

Shrubs and small trees: Autumn sage of various colors, kidneywood, cenizo, retama, rose pavonia, evergreen senna, mountain sage, black dalea, and rosemary.

Perennial forbs: Lindheimer’s senna, Maximilian sunflower, gayfeather, tall goldenrod, zexmenia, prairie verbena, indigo spires, yellowbells, corona de Cristo, obedient plant, gaura, Mexican bush sage, fall aster, Gregg’s mistflower, rainlily, Navaho tea, straggler daisy, Mexican red sage, Mexican mint marigold, tropical sage, purple coneflower, giant blue sage, Turk’s cap, and snapdragon vine.

Annual forbs: common sunflower, eryngo, hierba del Marrano, and cowpen daisy.

Grasses having just put up a fresh seed head or still in bloom: Indiangrass, switchgrass, big bluestem, little bluestem, sideoats grama, silver bluestem, blue grama, buffalograss, meadow dropseed, plains lovegrass, Lindheimer muhly, canyon muhly, and seep muhly.

Just outside the yard we see frostweed and snow-on-the-mountain.

The point of all of this is that we are fortunate in the Hill Country to have so many native plants that bloom in the fall. Needless to say, the butterflies and hummingbirds are happy about all of the flowers and especially the diversity of species.

This collection of plants wasn’t always here and it obviously didn’t just happen overnight. I can take no credit for all of the planning, planting and tending my wife did to achieve this diversity, but I can certainly attest to the beauty and enjoyment we get from it. And the butterflies, bees and other insects that evolved

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with these mostly native plants certainly appreciate having their foods available. And of course, the frogs, toads and lizards that live on these insects appreciate it too.

So much of what might have been called “natural areas” in the past have been lost to development, farms and overgrazed and overbrowsed ranches that much of the vegetation that was the base of the food chain for all native Hill Country animals is now disappearing.

Gardeners like my wife are working to restore native habitat to our gardens to create an oasis where both native plants and native animals can find conditions more like they had both evolved with. As the human population continues to increase and development takes increasingly more of our natural areas, the backyard oases will become more and more important.

So I urge all landowners to grow a great diversity of native plants, eliminate the non-native ones and do your part to preserve and restore native Hill Country areas.

And get out and enjoy this wonderful Hill Country Second Spring!

REMINDER



DECEMBER

December

There will be no chapter meeting or newsletter in December.

Book Club—Kerrville Chapter



2025

January 15

Entangled Life by Merlin Sheldrake

February 19:

Sacred Nature by Karen Armstrong

March 19:

The Well-Gardened Mind by Sue Stuart-Smith

BOERNE PGARP IS LOOKING FOR ADDITIONAL VOLUNTEERS



BY KATHY WEBSTER

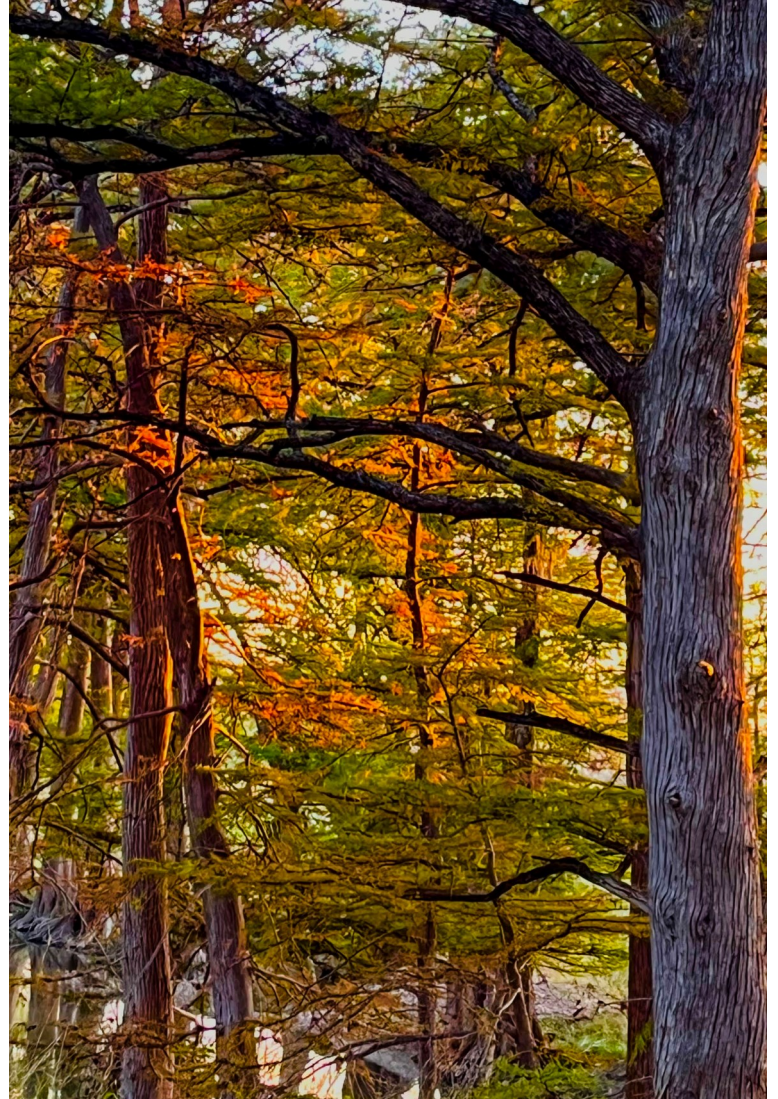
A pollinator garden was recently installed at the office of Love Kendall County Kids on the campus of St. Peter's Catholic Church in Boerne. Thank you to all the Boerne NPSOT volunteers who donated their time, effort, and plants! Additional volunteers are needed to fulfill requests for pollinator garden consultations in the Boerne area. If you would like to be part of a team that visits homes and commercial sites to plan pollinator gardens, please contact Kathy Webster at katweb59@gmail.com.

The View from Rusty Bend

When the falcons return

Sometimes we take catastrophe and turn it into a kiss. ~ Martha Silano

October flashes its signals.
Kestrels have returned.
The larger female
decorates the ancient mesquite
overlooking the meadow.
Her mate claims
a fence post near a gully.
Each purpose built
for a particular prey.
They teach a way of knowing:
Perch near dinner.
Let there be space between you.
Adapt to change.
See with exquisite precision.
Then foxes have their own motto:
First, go where it's safe,
then watch.
Watch with perfect ears.
Ravens, with their patterns,
instruct: give in
over and over again,
as they partner for life,
and fly in tandem.
Then the bees,
so fluent in grief,
taking and bringing
messages from beyond.
Bees teach persistence and care.
I claim all these ways of knowing,
though I am wingless and slow,
and no longer see so good.
I do know to wander outside
with my catastrophes
in my pockets.
My teachers on the verge of speech.



October light on the Guadalupe

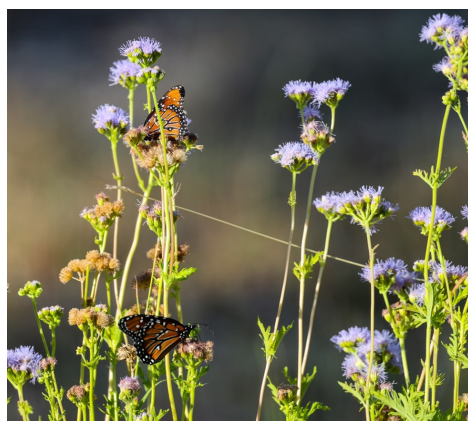
October at Rusty Bend has a way of making me grateful for every day I am given. A welcome overnight chill serves as antidote to overwarm days. Hurricanes have slid by even as we crave their rain. They call it a flash drought, and I know it by the sudden crunch of grass underfoot.

There's talcum powder on each road, path and tree. I find covert stories in the dirt. The forked prints of fawns make a 3-D calligraphy that etches their nocturnal wanderings. In the fine silt, scorpions telegraph with dots and long dash. Armadillos drag their tails like the little dragons they are.

Yet October is for open windows and a light so fine, showing off lengthening shadows that seem somehow laden with longing. Asters fling wide their lavender glory as sulfur butterflies gorge. Blue mist blooms hang with queens.

As fall arrives, the orange in the tops of cypress trees spreads along the river. Rust is my religion. Each gingered day reminds me to worship. Autumn with its obligatory losses reminds me—see the wisdom in letting go, though I will sorely miss the colors as the leaves drift to earth.

Yet the light summons me home, down the dusty road. Like everything, I'm full of thirst. I'll put my mouth below the spout. Our well tastes like rain and rapids and the purity of limestone caves. I know that morning fogs on the river will return. I know the rains will resume. I make my promise to cherish every drop, inspired by autumn light and her long, beckoning shadows.



Queen butterflies on Gregg's Blue Mist

Poem, images and essay by Lucy Griffith Copyright 2024

Lucy Griffith, PhD co-manages Rusty Bend with her husband, Andy Robinson. She also writes poetry, her muse, a tractor named Mabel. The story of the Burro Lady of West Texas, told in poems, [We Make a Tiny Herd](#), has been awarded the 2020 Willa Literary Award for Poetry as well as the Wrangler Award by the Cowboy Hall of Fame.

A new collection celebrating the brush country is forthcoming in November from FlowerSong Press and can be pre-ordered from this link:

[The Place the Spiders Waved by Lucy Griffith \(Coming in the Fall of 2024\)](#)
— FlowerSong Press & Juventud Press

Comments welcome at lucygriffithwriter@gmail.com

About us

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST 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.

Chapter meetings are held on the fourth Monday of the month (except in December). Members and the public are welcome to attend in person or virtually. There is no cost to attend.

We meet in the auditorium at the Guadalupe Basin Natural Resources Center (GBNRC) Building at 125 Lehmann Drive in Kerrville.

Doors open at 6:00 pm for socializing. Business Meeting begins at 6:30 pm. Advanced Training session begins at 7:00 pm.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS—2024

- President.....Jeff Schwarz
- Vice President.....Alice King
- Secretary.....Lisa Flanagan
- Treasurer.....Dot Maginot
- Advanced Training DirectorPatricia Poore
- Class Training DirectorCarra Milikien
- Communications DirectorMark Hults
- Membership Director.....Phil Roberson
- Volunteer Service Director.....David Drake
- Past Class Representative.....Lou Hugman
- Past President.....Carla Stang
- Chapter State RepresentativeVern Crawford
- Chapter Advisor.....Michelle Haggerty

Learn more on our website:
txmn.org/hillcountry

The Texas Star is a monthly publication of the Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. News, essays, comments and ideas are welcome. Please email them to:
newsletter@hillcountrytmn.org

QUESTIONS ABOUT MEMBERSHIP?
ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS
 Email Membership Director, Phil Roberson
membership@hillcountrytmn.org

See our Facebook Page!
 Search Texas Master Naturalist, Hill Country or click [HERE](#)



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The opinions expressed are those of the authors and editor.

