**Lake CC SP Cheat Sheet**

This year there will be less emphasis on plant identification for interns due to a thorough AT Program of Plant Identification developed over the Summer. Instead, the emphasis will be on what the Master Naturalist should observe about plants.

**Several items to consider:**

1. Lists are evolving entities, each time we come to the park, we discover new plants; likewise, as we visit different parts of the park, we discover different plants. While our lists at the various sites will evolve and grow, we will always limit the number of plants for a Master Naturalist to learn. If the Naturalist chooses to pursue plant identification beyond that, that will be great.
2. The record Blackbrush Acacia in Texas is in this park. Discovered only several years ago, it stands at over 21 feet tall.

**What to observe when examining plants?**

* **Taste:** sometimes it is useful to taste a leaf (Taste not Eat); all plants are edible **ONCE!**
* **General description of plant and vegetative density:** are the plants low to ground, erect, prostrate, climbing or leaning; sparce or growing in dense vegetative surroundings
* **Plant-Size**: remember you may be looking at a seedling. Look at a number of the species
* **Leaves:** **Remove leaf from plant** examine the sap (clear or milky); look at location of leaves (Opposite or Alternate, or Clustered); coloration (Top and Bottom); are leaves same shape and size top to bottom of plant; do leaves have smooth or serrated edges; are they smooth, rough, waxy, fuzzy on the surface (check both sides); are leaves single or multiples; are leaves parallel veined or palmate veined; when crushed, do they have a unique odor
* **Plant structure as a whole**. Is it tree-like or shrub-like; does it have one trunk or many; are branches pliable or brittle (tough); are stems thorned or thornless; are thorns straight or curved; how are thorns presented (paired or scattered)?
* **Bark:** look at color, texture, branching of the bark
* **Relative abundance:** is the observed one of many of the same species or a novelty
* **Flowers:** observe color, number of petals; are petals united or separate; are flowers perfect or imperfect (ask facilitator if you need definitions); is flower large or small; when do you see the flower; is it open or closed when you observe it; Is ovary superior or inferior; are flowers solitary, in clusters (at some point you will need to identify cluster types, inflorescences)
* **Fruit/seeds:** Examine plant for fruit, seed pods; does the plant appear to have extended blooming period
* **Soil and other parameters:** general description of soil; topography; prevailing wind conditions; elevation above sea level

Record your observations. The more items you observe, the better you will become at noting characteristics for identification of plant species and families, and ultimately competent in the use of dichotomous keys for plants.