

HABITAT HERALD

Wildlife Austin's monthly Newsletter



Wildlife Austin

City of Austin
Parks and Recreation
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Austin, TX 78705
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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Saturday, August 8th:

11:00am

Austin 2nd Annual Duck Derby
Ann Richards Bridge- Congress
Street

www.austinduckderby.com

Saturday, August 22nd:

4pm to Midnight

11th Annual Bat Fest
Congress Avenue Bridge

[http://www.austintexas.gov/
event/bat-fest](http://www.austintexas.gov/event/bat-fest)

Tuesday, August 25th:

10:30am to 11:30am

Grow Green: Landscape
Professional Training: Firewise
Landscaping

[http://www.austintexas.gov/
department/professional-training](http://www.austintexas.gov/department/professional-training)

Saturday, August 29th:

9:00am to 12:00pm

Riparian Restoration Class
Hosted by Watershed Protection
Department

[http://www.austintexas.gov/
event/riparian-restoration-class-0](http://www.austintexas.gov/event/riparian-restoration-class-0)



August 2015

With August possibly being one of the hottest months thus far this month we have brought you some cool content to help you beat the heat. In our Living in a WUI segment we discuss Firewise Landscaping listing tips and information to make sure your wildlife habitat or natural area remains fire resistant through proper maintenance, plant selection and more. We also have our upcoming Habitat Stewards and Urban Forest Steward Training beginning September 12th. This year Wildlife Austin is Partnering with Urban Forestry and Tree folks to offer a joint stewardship opportunity. You can either become a Habitat Steward, Urban Forest Steward or attend all classes and become a joint Steward! The first class is free and open to the public so make sure to sign up if you are interested in protecting our urban forest and making sure we have viable habitat for Austin's Wildlife. We hope you enjoy August's edition of the Habitat Herald.



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**Would you like
to receive the
newsletter?**

E-mail us at
wildlife@austintexas.gov



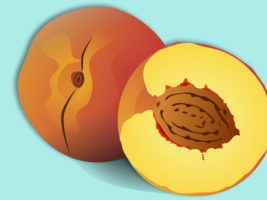
What's in Season?

August, being in the middle of summer, there is an abundance of fruits and vegetables in season right now. From peaches to tomatoes to watermelon, there are countless recipes you can make from these foods that are healthy and crowd pleasing.

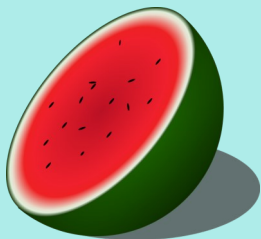
Fresh, organic produce can be obtained relatively easy in Austin. Almost every day of the week you can find a farmers' market around the city. For more information about the farmers' market closest to you visit: <http://sustainablefoodcenter.org/programs/sfc-farmers-market>

Here is some of the most popular produce that is in season right now:

Peaches	Carrots
Figs	Onions
Pears	Corn
Melons	Green Beans
Summer Squash	Peas
Cucumbers	Sweet Potatoes
Sweet and Hot Peppers	Culinary Herbs
Eggplant	Tomatoes



This is a staple in my kitchen in the summer. I often take it to work for lunch as well as barbeques and get-togethers. This dish is always a huge hit among friends and family. You can change the herbs or add other ingredients such as cubed mozzarella cheese or beans to make this a heartier dish.



Summer Cucumber Salad:

2 medium sized cucumbers, peeled, and sliced
4 medium tomatoes, sliced
1 tablespoon fresh basil, minced
2 green onions, chopped
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
Salt and pepper to taste
Mix all ingredients in a large bowl
Let sit for at least 1 hour to let the flavors combine
Serve at room temperature or cold

Recipe from: Camille Cotsakis

Living In a WUI

Fire Wise Landscaping

In Austin currently, much of new home development and growth of the population is congregating in traditionally natural areas. This encroachment into grasslands, forests, and farms can put lives and properties at risk if a wildfire were to start. In the past, wildfires were nature's way of clearing away any dead or downed materials to enrich the soils. Due to rapid urbanization, we have suppressed most fires, and this has caused a buildup of material on the forest floors that can easily ignite and spread across our region. Fires start easily and burn rapidly with abundant fuels on the forest and grassland floors; this provides a path for large trees to burn, and can create a problem for anyone living in the vicinity. Wildfires are a part of nature, and if managed correctly do not have to be a major natural disaster.

Careful selection and placement of plants, along with non-combustible building materials, can achieve both visual aesthetics and incorporate the concepts of Firewise landscaping and construction. Firewise landscaping takes into account many different aspects. Most important is the function of the landscape, the fit with nature and location, and following through with proper maintenance. The landscaping should fit into nature and the environment based on the climate, the location of the home on the lot, and if any slope is present. Information on the terrain, native vegetation, winds, seasonal weather, and the history of wildfires in the area will contribute to the best landscaping for your home.

Firewise landscaping does not need to be a concrete slab around your house to ensure it does not catch fire. Carefully selecting a variety of native plants that are placed in suitable areas can make the world of difference. Typically, select plants that have high water retention, high salt retention, lack aromatic oils, and have a low fuel volume. Plants that are drought tolerant and have deep roots are very safe choices, since they can withstand high heat.

Living In a WUI

Wildlife habitats can be created, along with Firewise landscaping, at your home. A wildlife friendly habitat should include food, water, shelter, and a place to raise their young. With careful planning your home can be not only be Firewise but also a wildlife habitat. Native shrubs, trees, and flowers provide foliage, nectar, pollen, berries, and seeds that wildlife need to survive. Native plants are well adapted to the climate we live in, usually require less maintenance, and attract desirable wildlife. Plants such as the Coral Yucca, White Mistflower, and Damianita are nice examples of plants to use in your landscaping. For more information on native plants to the area visit www.wildflower.org.



Figure 1- White Mistflower and Coral Yucca

Water is very important for wildlife, just like it is for us. Wildlife needs a source of clean water for drinking, bathing, and reproduction. A water source in your yard can come from a natural source such as ponds, lakes, rivers, or streams or a man-made source such as bird baths, puddling areas, or installed ponds. Water is an excellent feature to install in your backyard to make your home Firewise. Man-made ponds are relatively easy to install and make your yard a beautiful habitat.

Living In a WUI

Wildlife also needs shelter to hide from predators, people, and inclement weather. Native vegetation, small rock piles, and garden ponds incorporate shelter for wildlife as well as Firewise landscaping. Avoid wood or combustible materials as it can become a fire hazard if a wildfire were to start in your area. Many habitat features that serve as cover can also serve as locations for wildlife to raise their young. Human made items such as nesting boxes can be suitable alternatives as long as they are not made from highly flammable materials.

Proper maintenance is key to keeping your landscaping and home Firewise. Pruning, watering, and monitoring plant health are the most important elements to remember. Always keep in mind that brush and yard cutting need to be properly disposed. Clean under any decks and porches to ensure no plant material buildup, and remove mowed dry grasses and weeds regularly.

As new home development is moving into natural areas that are prone to wildfires, proper home landscaping is important for the safety of individuals as well as properties and homes. By incorporating Firewise landscaping and wildlife habitats, your property can be a gorgeous and safe place for the duration of your home's life.



Photo by: Camille Cotsakis

Written by: Camille Cotsakis—Wildlife Austin Summer 2015 Intern

To learn more about saving your life and property from wildfires visit www.firewise.org.

To certify your home as a wildlife habitat, the city will pre-pay your application for the National Wildlife Federation visit www.austintexas.gov/departments/wildlife-austin

School Yard Habitat Update

Donations and volunteers needed!

Campuses are looking for donations of the following materials for fall workdays:

- ✂ Compost and/or soil
- ✂ Native seeds, plants, shrubs and trees
- ✂ Tools
- ✂ 4 inch pots
- ✂ Limestone blocks
- ✂ Cedar logs
- ✂ Decomposed Granite
- ✂ Bird Feeders and/or bird seed



Schoolyard Habitat Success Depends on Volunteers Like You!

For more upcoming volunteer opportunities, please contact:

Anne Muller AISD Outdoor Learning Specialist amuller@austinisd.org or 841-5070



Sept. 12 - Oct. 17, 2015

First Class is free

Learn about proper tree care and how to protect Austin's wildlife through stewardship.

Cost: \$59 for Habitat Steward track, \$99 for Urban Forest Steward track or \$125 to be a joint Steward under both tracks.

You Will Learn About

- Wildlife Habitats
- Tree Care
- Beneficial Insects
- Native and Invasive Plants
- Water Conservation
- Tree ID and Common Tree Pest
- Community Stewardship
- Riparian Restoration
- Landscape Design Principals
- Schoolyard Habitats

www.austintexas.gov/departament/wildlife-austin **TreeFolks:** www.treefolks.org/ufs/



The City of Austin is proud to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you require assistance for participation in our programs or use of our facilities, please call (512) 974-6700.