



## ***RIPARIAN RECOVERY NETWORK NEWS***

**Riparian: wetlands adjacent to rivers or streams**



**No. 2, April 9, 2018**

### **Who Are We?**

The Riparian Recovery Network is about creating a shared vision for our recovering riparian land that balances our own individual needs with what is required to keep the Wimberley Valley's waterways clean, healthy, and beautiful. The network is about connections - connections with:

- EXPERTS providing learning through seminars, field trips, personal contact, and more ...
- PLANT RESOURCES including plant identification, recommendations, seeds, and more....
- EACH OTHER as together we learn and develop the best plan for our individual properties.

This is the second edition of the Riparian Recovery Network News. Our plan is to provide information covering topics of interest to our community on a regular basis (about every 4-6 weeks). We'd love to hear from you regarding ideas for subjects you'd like covered in future editions. And please share this information with friends and neighbors. If they want to receive this newsletter tell them to contact us at [riparian@haysmn.org](mailto:riparian@haysmn.org).

### **Vegetation Key To Riparian Recovery**

Thanks to free plants provided by Texas Parks and Wildlife and Treefolks, many of us have been able to jumpstart recovery of the land bordering Wimberley's waterways. What next? The experts say stay out of the way - trust nature knows what needs to happen.

One thing you can do is simply observe and understand what is growing on your property and why. So look around and notice what is already growing in your riparian area. If you are having trouble identifying a particular plant, send a picture to [riparian@haysmn.org](mailto:riparian@haysmn.org) and we will do our best to help you figure out what it is.

Riparian landscapes are not static - the same things don't always come up in the same places year after year. Rather the vegetation is constantly changing as the streambanks restore themselves. Key to the restoration process is the array of wetland loving plant life that have evolved along with our waterways.

There are two categories of plants - colonizers and stabilizers. Colonizers are often the first vegetation to show up on a gravel bar or other flood-scoured area. They got that name because they spread quickly either via stems that put out roots (stolons) or roots that put out stems (rhizomes). Early-stage colonizers are weak-rooted. Their main function is to quickly stabilize the rebuilding process. Late-stage colonizers grow more slowly, but have stronger roots designed to hold the new bank in place.

Colonizers are important because they tolerate places where there is very little soil. Some even thrive within the stream itself. As colonizers grow into thick mats, sediment is trapped creating niches where more deep-rooted plants, late colonizers and even stronger-rooted stabilizers can take hold. This process results in the constant building and rebuilding of our streambanks and protects the health of our beloved waterways.

Want to know more? Here's a link to a great video - <https://youtu.be/W2x7K8hEIUU?t=38>.

### **Examples of Wimberley Valley Colonizers and Stabilizers**

So meander down to where your land borders the water and look closely at what is growing there.



**Spikerush** is one of three colonizers Texas Parks and Wildlife distributed after the flood. Many people found when they went to plant the free seedlings, Spikerush was already growing on their property. This bright green, grassy-looking plant with small, almost inconspicuous seedheads grows in colonies that spread via underground rhizomes. The root system is fairly strong and can thus withstand moderate floods. And Spikerush often grows into the water where it captures the sediment so important to rebuilding stream banks.



**Emory Sedge** is another colonizer Texas Parks and Wildlife distributed after the Memorial Day flood. Like Spikerush, this plant too was often found already growing when people went to plant. Colonies of Emory sedge often occur in long, narrow bands along the water's edge and its root system is even stronger than Spikerush. Thus, banks anchored by Emory sedge can often withstand even more severe flooding. The root system of a similar species, Nebraska sedge, has been measured and demonstrates how dense the root structure of riparian plants can be - 20 miles of root in a cubic foot of soil. The dense root mass of this and other riparian plants are the way nature stores water for release during periods of drought.



**Whitetop sedge** is the third colonizer included in the Texas Parks and Wildlife giveaway. The reason it was included is it's "pretty" with white patches on its upper leaves and white seedheads that appear to the naked eye as flowers. While the roots are not as strong as Emory sedge, the intertwining of Whitetop sedge with other plants actually increases the stability of the resulting structure. This is one of the reasons diversity is so important for healthy riparian buffer zones.



**Sawgrass** is a sedge, not a grass and is in fact the largest Texas sedge. The plants can grow up to 6 feet tall with seedheads extending the height to 8 feet. As its name implies, the edges of its long leaves are sharp and can cut your finger. But that can be a good thing if it is planted where you don't want people to go. And it is easy to transplant by simply digging up a clump along with some roots. (Wear gloves and long sleeves of course.) If you don't have any and want some, let us know and we'll see if we can find someone with plants to spare.



**Frogfruit** is an early-stage colonizer with low growing stems that root easily at each node. The dainty white flowers make it a great nectar plant for butterflies. And true to its name, frog lay their eggs on the plant. To introduce Frogfruit into a new area on your property, simply clip off a branch near the main root and gently loosen the roots growing along the branch. You can then replant by cutting the branch between each root node for maximum coverage.

Coming Next Time: Stabilizers and Their Function

### **Upcoming Events/Opportunities**

#### ***Lady Bird Johnson Spring Wildflower Sale***

The Wildflower Center will be holding its bi-annual native plant sale on April 14th from 9AM to 5PM. If you are a member, the members only sale is April 13th also from 9AM to 5PM. Become a member and you get a 10% discount on plants. The sale features hundreds of Texas natives including wetland specimens and they often have plant varieties you can't find anywhere else. To review the plant list for the sale go to:

[https://www.wildflower.org/collections/collection.php?collection=spring\\_sale](https://www.wildflower.org/collections/collection.php?collection=spring_sale)

#### ***Riparian Restoration Site Tours***

Texas Parks and Wildlife is hosting three tours of the riparian restoration demonstration site they have designed and implemented jointly with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. The intended audience is land owners and land managers of stream side properties who are interested in learning about what has been done there and how they might apply similar techniques on their own property. The dates for the tours are April 15 (Sunday), May 1 (Tuesday), and May 8 (Tuesday). All tours will start at 5:30 PM and last approximately one hour. Each tour is limited to 20 participants. To reserve a spot contact Ryan McGillicuddy at [ryan.McGillicuddy@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:ryan.McGillicuddy@tpwd.texas.gov).

The Riparian Recovery Network News is a periodic Hays County Master Naturalist publication covering topics of interest to the Riparian Recovery Network community. Please share this newsletter with friends and neighbors who would enjoy information on restoring and enjoying their riparian zone. Send any questions you might have or ideas for future topics to [riparian@haysmn.org](mailto:riparian@haysmn.org). And, if you are not currently on our mailing list, use this same address to request

