



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

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



**No. 11, April 9, 2019**

### **Riparian Diversity At the Cypress Creek Nature Preserve**

Riparian zones are special. One reason is the diversity of vegetation their moist soils support. Volunteers associated with the Hays Master Naturalists and The Hill Country Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas are in the process of surveying the plants at the Cypress Creek Nature Preserve. Thus far the group has collectively identified over 70 different plant species growing within the 7.24 acre Nature Preserve. It's spring and lots of plants are blooming. So if you haven't walked the trail lately, now is a good time to get ideas for what you can introduce into your own riparian zone.

Here are some of the "showier" things you will see:



**Red buckeye** (*Aesculus pavia*) - With clusters of red flowers six to ten inches long, Red Buckeye will be one of the first things you notice. A variation with pale to vivid yellow flowers, the variation *flavescens*, has also been seen in the preserve. And the two varieties can hybridize resulting in various combinations on red and yellow flowers. The red buckeye foliage consists of five large leaflets joined at the center. Red buckeye loses its leaves by late summer. So you might want to plant it in a place where it is very visible in the spring and less noticeable by end of summer.

**False gromwell** (*Onosmodium bejariense*) - You'll should see lots of False gromwell blooming right now in the preserve. Also called Soft-hair marbleseed, you can recognize False gromwell as it first emerges during the winter months by its distinctive leaves. The greenish white to cream-colored blooms become visible starting in late March. The other great thing about this delightful plant is that it can tolerate shade. You can gather seeds once they have matured in late spring. Or you can try propagating it from cuttings in late summer.



**Lyreleaf sage** (*Salvia lyrata*) - This time of year you can't miss Lyreleaf sage with its purple blooms visible from March through May. And its distinctive leaves last all year round making it a great candidate as groundcover. The three lobed leaves form a rosette around the base and are easily recognized by their distinctive reddish-purple veins. Smaller, simpler leaves follow the stem up to the flowerhead. Best of all, Lyreleaf sage reseeds easily in the moist, sandy soils found in healthy riparian areas.

**Death camas** (*Zigadenus nuttallii*) - The Death camas is just about finished blooming, but it seemed to be unusually prolific this year. So why the ominous name for such a pretty flower. That's because all parts of the plant are poisonous. Sheep are often poisoned by it and it is said that the Indians weeded it from their Camus plots and thus the name. Another name for the plant is Poison onion as it has long narrow leaves grow out of a large, black-coated bulb. There is an edible kind of Camus that looks similar. But you certainly don't want to mix-up the two.



**Box elder maple** (*Acer negundo*) - Box elder maple, also sometimes called Ash-leaf maple, usually grows into a small to medium size tree with a short trunk and widely spreading, irregular branches. Thus it is great for providing shade on a creek bank helping keep the water a few degrees cooler in the heat of the summer. And it's light green leaves look great as they catch the sunlight. But unfortunately unlike some maple species the leaves don't turn brilliant colors in the fall.

Not all of the things we saw are native. There are about a dozen non-natives included in the plant survey. Fortunately only six of these non-natives are listed in the Texas Invasives database (<https://www.texasinvasives.org>). So why is one species considered invasive and another not? It all depends on whether its growth pattern is such that it threatens native species. And something that is simply non-native in one environment may be invasive in another. That's not only true geographically, but the threat may also vary based on soil type and moisture content. Here are two examples of non-natives found in the Nature Preserve:

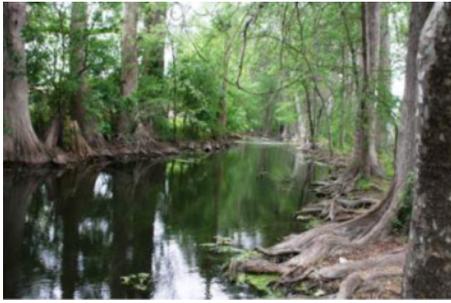
**Wild Leek** (*Allium ampeloprasum*) - The native range of Wild leek extends from southern Europe to include parts of western Asia and northern Africa. But it has been introduced and naturalized in many other places over a long period of time. In fact, it is said that its introduction into Great Britain happened in prehistoric times. Research thus far appears to indicate it is not considered invasive in Central Texas. And best of all, it is edible. There is lots in the riparian zone at the Leaning Pear and at times you may even find it on the menu.



**Chinese parasol tree** (*Firmiana simplex*) - Unusual in appearance with green bark and leaves as much as a foot wide, Chinese parasol tree is a tempting specimen plant. But this Asian native becomes invasive when planted in Central Texas. That's especially true in close proximity to a waterway where floods can accelerate its spread. This particular specimen is the off-spring of a tree planted on a property upstream from the Nature Preserve. The mother plant has been removed, but its seeds are still around. Fortunately there is a Master Naturalist in our community who is familiar with the plant and has been diligently removing it whenever and wherever it pops up.

### **Spring - A Great Time to Visit Riparian Zones**

So head over to the Nature Preserve and take a walk - get ideas for own little piece of riparian heaven. You might also pay a visit to the swimming hole area of Blue Hole Park to see a more manicured version of a healthy riparian landscape. And remember our water resources also need healthy seasonal creeks. To see such an area, you can take a hike along Dry Cypress Creek just above Jacobs Well.



But you may also want to explore new territory. If you are up for a fun day trip, the Cibilo Nature Center and Farm ([www.cibolo.org](http://www.cibolo.org)) in Boerne is just over a hour drive from Wimberley. The Nature Center got its start in 1988 when a group of friends approached the City of Boerne with a proposal to turn their 100 acre park that borders Cibilo Creek into a protected area. More recently, the city acquired 62 acres of historic farmland across the creek which is being converted into a sustainable living education center and community hub.

The Cibilo Nature Center side of the creek features four distinct ecosystems, a tall grass prairie, a riparian forest, a live-oak savannah, and a spring-fed marsh. The center is open from 8AM till dusk and the visitor center is staffed from 9AM-5PM on weekdays and 1PM-5PM on weekends. If you happen to be there on a Saturday between 9AM and 1PM, you might also stop by their farmers market. The Nature Center also sponsors a variety of workshops (see the calendar on their website for more information.) And, on May 4th at the Kendall County Fairgrounds, there will be a “Mostly Native Plant Sale”(also on their calendar).

Plant sales are a good way to find native plants that aren’t readily available from commercial nurseries. Here are a few more great opportunities this month in nearby places that are also fun to just visit:

**April 12-13 - Austin - Spring Plant Sale, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center** - Friday, April 12th, is their members only sale. If you are not a member, the Saturday, April 13th sale is open to the general public. The hours both days are 9AM to 5 PM. And while you are there, walk around the grounds. It is a delight any time of year, but a spring stroll is always special. For more information and directions go to [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org).

**April 20 - New Braunfels - Earth Day Celebration**  
**Celebration, Headwaters at the Comal** - The Headwaters of the Comal is under restoration and the site is being developed in wonderful ways. It will be open to the public from 1PM-5PM on Saturday, April 20th for their 2nd annual Earth Day Celebration which will include a plant sale. Find more information at [www.headwatersatthecomal.com](http://www.headwatersatthecomal.com)



**April 27 - Wimberley - Hill Country Chapter Native Plant Society, Emily Ann Butterfly Festival** - Closer to home, the Hill Country Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) will be selling native plants at the Butterfly Festival here in Wimberley on April 27th from 9AM to 5PM. For more on the event go to <http://emilyann.org/butterfly.html>.

Still can’t find what you want? One more suggestion. Native American Seed offers a wide variety of native seeds and seed mixes. These include their Riparian Recovery Mix which was developed specifically for the Blanco after the 2015 Memorial Day flood. They also offer great grasses both as seed and root bundles including some riparian favorites (e.g. Eastern gamagrass). To access their catalog, go to <http://www.seedsources.com/catalog/>

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

