

A Garden Plan that *Really Worked!*
Report prepared by Cynthia Maguire
November 13, 2008

One good thing frequently leads to another. That was definitely the case during fall 2008 in the Texas Woman's University gardens. First, the Native Plant Society of Texas decided to hold its thirtieth anniversary meeting in Denton in October 2010. Next, it was decided to hold the 2010 Symposium on the TWU campus—the place where the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) originated. At about the same time, trees and gardens were topics in a few meetings involving landscape staff and science faculty at TWU. There is always a need for tender loving attention in a garden, and some areas near the Little-Chapel-in-the-Woods were overdue for some serious attention. In particular, a native plant garden area dedicated as the Benny J. Simpson Memorial Garden in 1997 had become badly overrun by one particular species and needed a more pleasing balance restored. Soon an idea was born: If we work together, we can give Benny's garden a much-needed facelift. It turned out to be a very popular idea among members of the local NPSOT chapter, Trinity Forks, as well as the TWU community.

Bobby Trevino (TWU Landscape Services Supervisor) and **Cynthia Maguire** (TWU Chemistry & Physics and NPSOT) met in the garden in early November to firm up the plans. NPSOT members agreed to donate plants from their gardens and to provide supervisory assistance to student volunteers on the garden workday. Landscape Services agreed to furnish tools and other supplies. The date was set for Tuesday, November 11, 2008. Science faculty solicited student volunteers, mostly from courses emphasizing civic engagement and teaching the concept of ecologic sustainability. Students agreed to come see what all the excitement was about—did anyone hear those two magic words? “Bonus points!”

Bobby also happened to mention that it would be wonderful to be able to add a few trees to restore losses in the Lowry Woods forest area where the gardens are located. Cynthia realized that a certain group of people would likely be very interested in helping to make these improvements happen. She quickly started a fundraising campaign, appealing to the dozen or so members of NPSOT who also happen to be employees of TWU. In no time, money started flowing and it was time to go shopping! She called **Don Kenney**, owner of Painted Flower Farm and a grower of many native landscape plants, and made an appointment. A total of 127 plants were selected among 21 species, and Don even agreed to deliver them for free. Thanks, Don!

A cool rainy Monday preceded the planned workday on Tuesday November 11. About three inches of badly needed rain fell Monday and then a beautiful, clear autumn day arrived on Tuesday. By 7:00 a.m. **Irene Hansen** (NPSOT) had delivered her donated plants for the garden and made a quick assessment with her shovel: it's not too muddy. She called Cynthia to report on conditions and the workday was ON! At 8:30, **Becky Chisenhall** (TWU Landscape Services) met Cynthia to deliver two loads of tools and other supplies to assist the project. By 9:00 a.m., Don Kenney had arrived at TWU with a truckload of plants and the first few student volunteers arrived in time to help unload. Around the same time, five more members of the Trinity Forks Chapter of NPSOT were bringing plant donations dug from their gardens at home. NPSOT members provided 73 plants representing 14 species. Altogether, 200 new plants were added to the garden on Tuesday. Of these, 31 were young trees. **Marshall Fox, Fonda Fox and Mike**

Mizell, and Cynthia Maguire, all NPSOT members, spent the day mentoring students and teaching them how to prepare the soil and install new plants. By mid-morning the call went out to Becky: bring more shovels! Bring more gloves! A small army had arrived!!! Teams of students were spread all around the gardens planting trees and shrubs, vines and wildflowers.

Dozens attacked the overly prolific patch of sea oats in Benny's garden, first removing the entire seed crop. The rain proved a great blessing, softening the soil and making it possible to remove many excess plants. Seed and plants were bagged and set aside: too precious to waste! By afternoon, **Marilyn Blanton** (NPSOT) and **Dorothy Thetford** (NPSOT) had picked up over one dozen large black bags of sea oats to be delivered and donated to nearby parks. Later, new native plants such as pigeonberry, gold columbines, American beautyberry and rock roses replaced the sea oats and Benny's garden took on a whole new character.

One pair of students was assigned the special task of finding and removing a particular weed, the invasive Chinese privet. Numerous small saplings were removed. Bobby Trevino also gave permission to remove a large privet near the top of the hill. It is most likely the parent of those young sprouts. Two students arriving late in the afternoon with a fresh supply of energy attacked the large privet, reducing it to one-third of its original size. By 4:15 the entire garden area was tidied up and all the hubbub of the day was gone. **Phil Burney** (TWU Landscape Services) set the sprinklers to run that night to help all the new additions settle in to the neighborhood.

Faculty and staff visiting the garden Wednesday morning pronounced the workday a wonderful success. Visitors to the gardens in years to come will enjoy many visual delights thanks to the efforts of so many who worked together on November 11, 2008. Because of so many people pitching in where and how they were able, a small idea to improve the Benny J. Simpson Memorial Garden turned into a huge success throughout the TWU gardens. Many, many thanks to all!

Donor Details

A huge debt of gratitude goes to **109 student volunteers** from these seven courses. Thank you for caring enough to share your strength, energy and enthusiasm. Several were heard to say, "I didn't expect it to be fun, but it is! I'm sorry to have to leave." or "I have to go to class now, but could I come back later?" We hope you will remember how satisfying it can be to work with the earth and enjoy nature. Thanks, too, to your professors, for showing you that Science really can be fun, and it is ever-so-relevant to our everyday lives.

Professor	Course	Number of Students	Total Hours
Rich Jones	Earth Science	8	8
Cynthia Maguire	Fund of Science	9	15
	Env Chem	23	42
	Intro to Chem	40	75
Camelia Maier	Botany	19	19
Lynda Peebles	Intro to Organic Chem	9	27
	Physical Chem	1	2

Total	7 courses	109	188
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Our deep and grateful appreciation is extended to the TWU Landscape Services staff, headed by Bobby Trevino. We realize the pride and sense of ownership you have in maintaining a beautiful campus. It's not easy to let an unpredictable group of volunteers move in and make changes, and we hope it was worth it! Thanks for your willingness to take that risk, and to be supportive of our efforts. We hope to continue this relationship for years to come and value your partnership in improving and maintaining the gardens at TWU.

An army of students would not have learned nearly so much if they hadn't had a LOT of new plants to install. The NPSOT members/TWU employees who gave so generously deserve to be recognized, although most would probably prefer to remain in the background. Included are **Don and Pat Edwards, Laurie Hammett, Lisa Haynes, Mary Evelyn Huey, Rich Jones, Cynthia Maguire, Camelia Maier, Joan Phelps and Caroline Polliard**. Altogether, a little over \$500 was donated for purchase of native plants to add to the TWU gardens. Member plants donated are estimated at a value of approximately \$300. In addition, Trinity Forks Chapter of NPSOT has committed an additional \$200 for more plants to be added soon. A special thank you is also due to **Don Kenney**. He has worked hard to increase his native plant nursery stock and is always generous to share them with NPSOT at wholesale prices to stretch our non-profit dollars. Because of Don, the value of our donations was greatly multiplied. The following lists detail the species and quantities of plants donated on November 11.

Trinity Forks Member-Donated Plants		
<u>Perennial Shrubs/Wildflowers</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Qty</u>
American beautyberry	1 gal	2
Canada wildrye	1 qt	4
Coralberry	1 qt	8
Fall obedient plant	bare root	24
Horseherb	1 qt	3
Pigeonberry	1 gal	3
Purple coneflower	4"	2
Snapdragon vine	1 qt	8
Spiderwort	1 qt	4
Standing cypress	1 qt	8
Wood fern	1 gal	3
Subtotal = 11 species		69
<u>Trees</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Qty</u>
Carolina buckthorn	1 gal	2
Mexican plum	5 gal	1
Texas mountain laurel	1 gal	1
Subtotal = 3 species		4

Total = 14 species		73
Purchased Plants from Painted Flower Farm		
<u>Perennial Shrubs/Wildflowers</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Qty</u>
Beautyberry, American	3 gal	3
Columbine, Texas Gold	1 gal	12
Frog fruit	1 gal	6
Gaura, White	1 gal	12
Honeysuckle, Coral	1 gal	2
Horseherb	1 gal	6
Hummingbird Bush	1 gal	2
Obedient Plant, Spring	1 gal	6
Pigeonberry	1 gal	6
Rose, Rock	1 gal	6
Sage, Autumn, Red	1 gal	6
Sage, Azure	1 gal	6
Sage, Scarlet (Salvia coccidian)	1 gal	12
Sumac, Fragrant	3 gal	3
Turk's Cap	1 gal	12
Subtotal = 15 species		100
<u>Trees</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Qty</u>
Buckthorn, Carolina	1 gal	6
Dogwood, Roughleaf	3 gal	15
Holly, Possumhaw	3 gal	3
Oak, Bur	5 gal	1
Oak, Chinquapin	5 gal	1
Persimmon	5 gal	1
Subtotal = 6 species		27
Total = 21 species		127