

FREE!! Advice and Help for Landowners From the Experts

I find that many people are unaware of the resources available to them on a wide variety of issues confronting today's landowners. There are four main governmental agencies with websites and publications on almost any topic you are interested in as well as local experts available to help you. And there are local chapters of organizations such as the Texas Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, and Native Plant Society of Texas. Most all information and events of all of these organizations are free. Here is some of their contact information.

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service, at 3655 Highway 27, phone 257-6568 is primarily involved in helping farmers and ranchers raise their crops and animals, but they can be very helpful to small landowners as well. Their local web site is <http://kerr.agrilife.org> which contains listings of upcoming events of interest to most landowners. The AgriLife Extension Bookstore, <https://agrilifebookstore.org>, contains lots of publications on various topics, some of them are free. Texas AgriLife Extension also sponsors the 4-H clubs.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department not only manages all of our State Parks, Natural Areas and Historical sites and regulates hunting in the state, but they also have Private Lands Biologists whose job it is to help landowners with whatever questions or problems they have. The website is: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/habitats/hillcountry/. The local office is at 309 Sidney Baker S. and their phone is 896-2500.

The forester for the Texas Forest Service responsible for Kerr County is located in San Antonio at mduff@tfs.tamu.edu, phone 210-494-1742. The State website is www.texasforests.tamu.edu, and an excellent website dedicated to oak wilt is www.texasoakwilt.org.

The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service has offices at 420 Water St. Suite 101, phone 896-4911. The NRCS agents are especially knowledgeable about soils, soil and water conservation, and grazing issues. The national website is www.nrcs.usda.gov.

The Hill Country Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist has monthly meetings open to the public on the fourth Monday of most months at the UGRA building. You can go to the website, www.txmn.org/hillcountry/ to read the current newsletter and find out about the speaker and topic. The chapter is currently accepting applications to join the next training class in the fall. You can get more information about the classes from Eileen Gotke at 367-4001 or gotke@hctc.net.

This Master Naturalist chapter also has a volunteer program called the Land Management Assistance Program in which volunteers visit a landowner's property, identify plants and discuss any questions or issues the landowner is interested in. Requests for a free volunteer visit can be made by calling Riverside Nature Center at 257-4837 or e-mailing jstmn@ktc.com.

The local Master Gardeners organization is sponsored by Texas AgriLife Extension. The Master Gardener organization has members who have been trained in all aspects of gardening and they have volunteers available to answer gardeners' questions. They can be reached at the AgriLife Extension phone listed above. Their website is www.hillcountrymastergardeners.org.

The Kerrville Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas also has monthly meetings open to the public. You can find out about the next meeting by going to www.npsot.org/kerrville/newsletters.htm.

Riverside Nature Center has educational events of various kinds throughout the year. Their web address is www.riversidenaturecenter.org.

Riverside Nature Center and the Native Plant Society will be having a Native Plant Sale on Saturday, April 28, from 8 to 3. There will also be speakers on Hill Country Archeology, Urban Critters, and Rainwater Harvesting, as well as free children's activities.

Readers, today's column represents my 100th Hill Country Naturalist column, and this seems like a good time to thank everyone who has expressed interest in these columns and has thanked me for writing them. It also seems like a good time to ask you if there are any nature topics you have not seen discussed that you would like to see. If you don't see your suggestion on these pages in the future, it will either be because I have already discussed it earlier or that I just don't know enough about the topic to write about it. You can e-mail me ideas at jstmn@ktc.com.

In addition, let me remind everyone that my website, www.hillcountrynaturalist.org contains not only previous KDT columns but also, on the Ecology page, various documents on nature and land management issues as well as a list of suggested nature books.

Until next time...

Jim Stanley is a Texas Master Naturalist and the author of the book "Hill Country Landowner's Guide". He can be reached at jstmn@ktc.com. Previous columns can be seen at www.hillcountrynaturalist.org.

