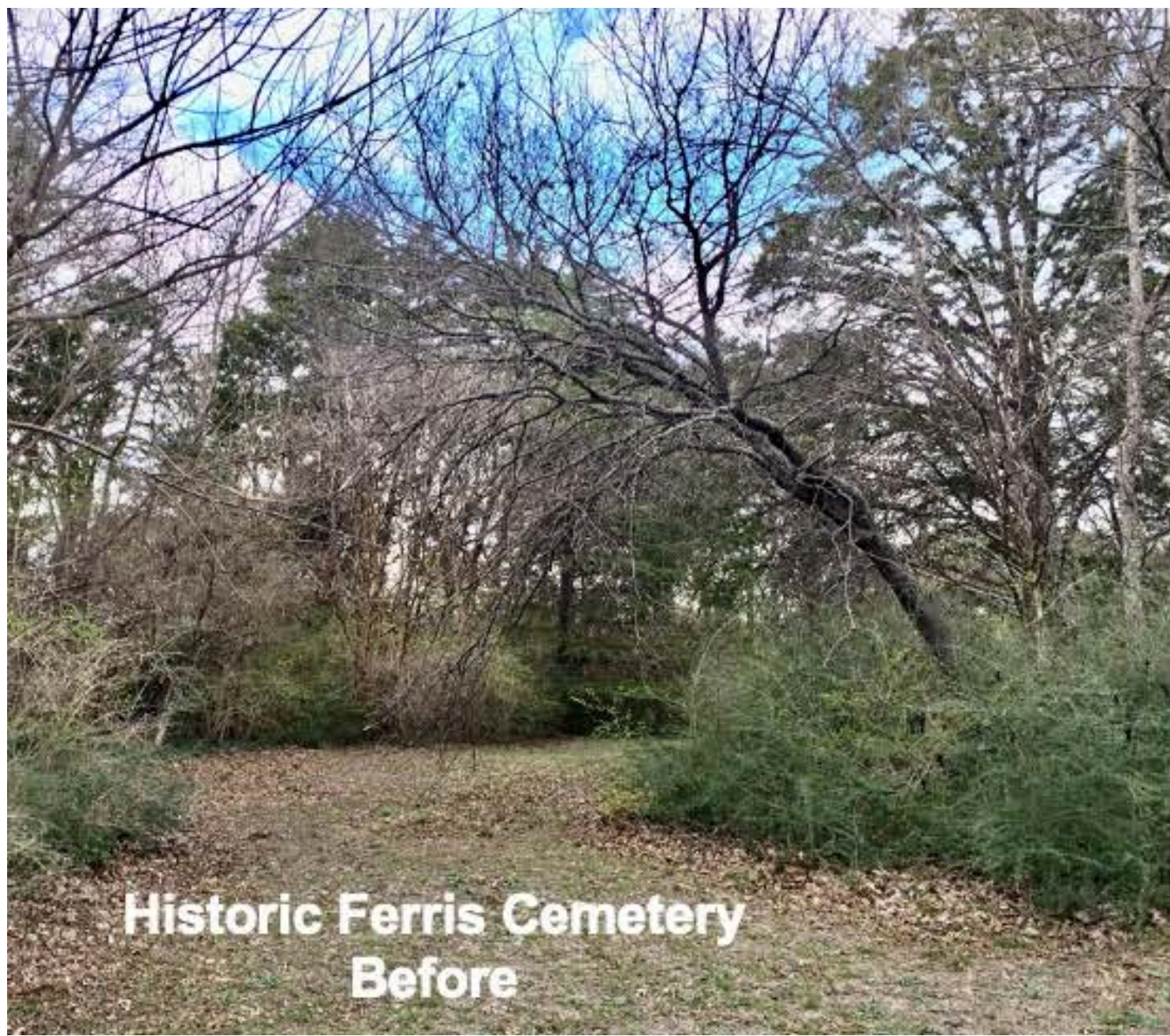
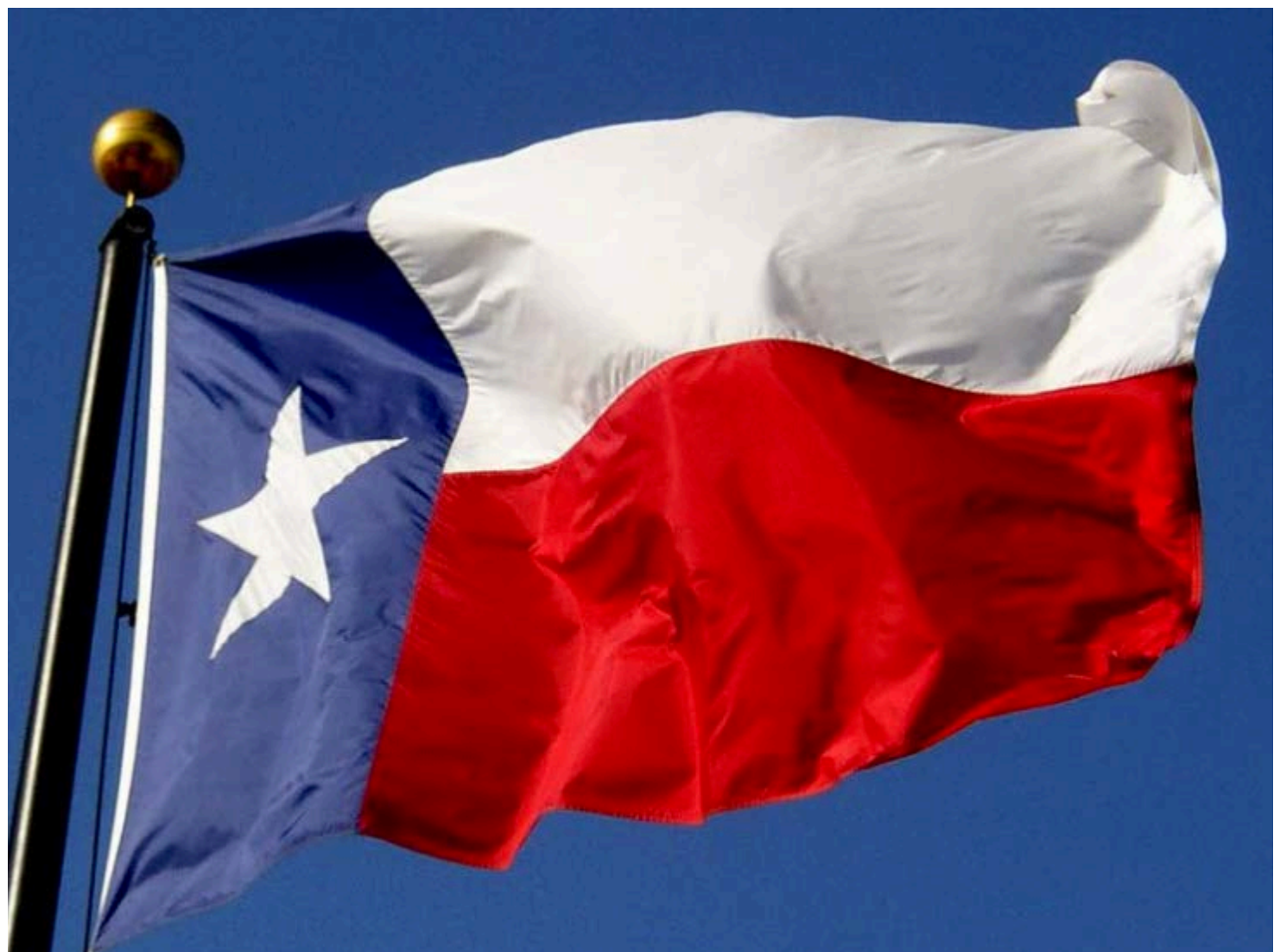




Constellation of Living Memorials' Guide to Intentional Native Landscaping of Cemeteries in Texas

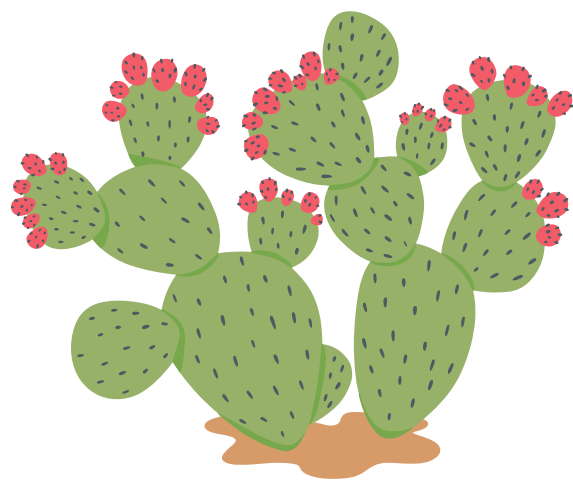


Authored by: Matthew Orwat,
Sam Kieschnick, Julie Fineman,
Louisa Kaplan, additional contributing
authors noted by section

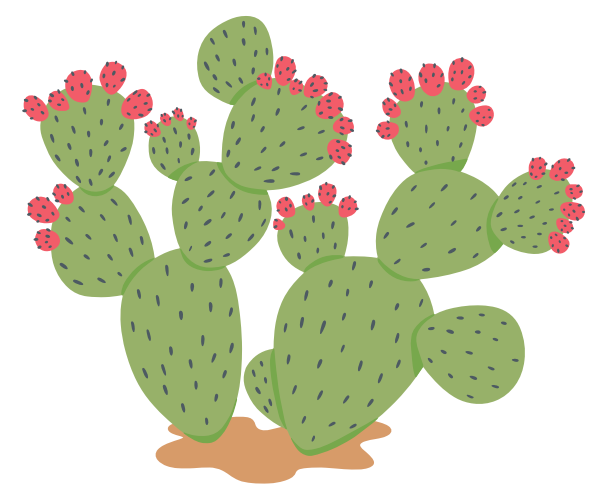


TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION





Introduction



By Kyle Cheesborough, Director of Gardens & Collections, Lady Bird Johnson
Wildflower Center, The University of Texas at Austin

ONE OF OUR earliest measures of human civilization is the act of burying our dead, often in ceremonial fashion and alongside artifacts once valued by the deceased. Modern day burial rites stem from a very intentional movement in the Victoria Era, where crowded inner-city church graveyards occupied space in rapidly expanding urban areas. The result was an effort in European cities to relocate cemeteries to vast, rolling estates, not for displacement so much as an opportunity to memorialize in a landscape of reflection, respite, and peace. It is during this time that Victorian-era British statesman William E. Gladstone reflected, “Show me the manner in which a nation or a community cares for its dead and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender sympathies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land, and their loyalty to high ideals”. In the United States, this movement took hold in eastern coastal cities and into the Midwest, soon reaching the western frontier in Texas and beyond. Settlers maintained small family plots, but as towns became cities in a fast-growing nation, the need for rural and larger cemeteries became necessary. In Texas alone there are over 15,000 cemeteries with nearly two-thirds in neglected care due to lack of support.

With the continued evolution of cemeteries, it is high time to begin a new approach to these spaces, one where myriad aspects serve to memorialize the interred. In many areas, historic cemeteries often hold valuable and unique flora as they often escaped the plow or grazing livestock. Additionally, cemeteries serve as greenspaces utilized by migratory birds, resident foxes, opossums, and many more resident and visiting fauna. The original vision for historic cemeteries as parks can hold just as true today, serving as safe places for walking dogs, running, biking, and other wellness activities. The right emphasis on native plant species in restorative work at these sites can produce wonderful results seen in greater visitation by wildlife and healthy, lower-maintenance landscapes. Through collaborative efforts between public, private, and governmental agencies, oft-overlooked historic cemeteries can thrive as greenspaces useful to plant, animal, and human communities.

In my capacity at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, paired with my time developing the Horticulture Department at historic Bellefontaine Cemetery & Arboretum in St. Louis, I have come to appreciate the importance of cemeteries as productive landscapes. Cemeteries often exist in under-resourced areas and serve as opportunities to engage with these communities. As research continues to show, access to nature and outdoor spaces is essential to happiness in the human experience and reimagining a cemetery space as more than memorialization allows us to tap into a new understanding.

Additionally, what better way to truly honor the memory of our lost loved ones than to return these landscapes to places abuzz with life, one where we can introduce a natural world to young generations in perpetuity while emphasizing their history and genealogy.

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Sustainable Cemeteries:



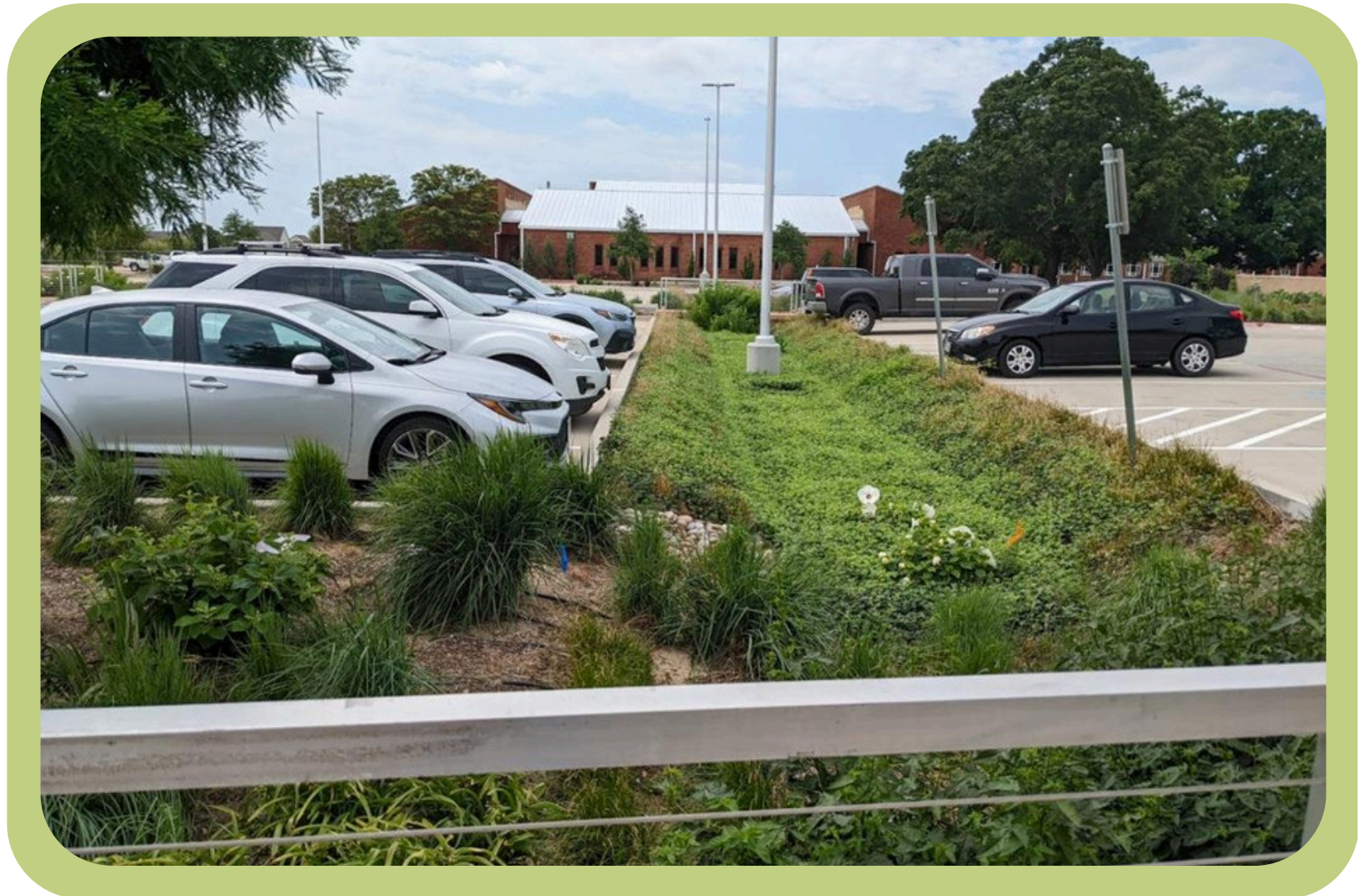
Integrating nature-based solutions for water quality and flood management

By Fouad Jaber Ph.D., P.E. Professor and Extension Specialist Biological & Agricultural Engineering Dept. Texas A&M AgriLife

CEMETERIES ARE land areas where we lay our loved ones to rest. As a result, these spaces become dedicated open green spaces sometimes for hundreds of years or more. Urban areas are losing green spaces at a very fast rate and cemeteries serve a vital role in preserving these spaces. When urbanization happens, pervious areas (land that allows water to infiltrate in the soil) are converted to impervious areas (land that generate high runoff). This usually leads to flooding, increased water pollution and high erosion in our streambanks. Mitigating the negative effects of urbanization can be achieved by integrating green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) into our urban environment. GSI are usually nature-based solutions that capture and infiltrate stormwater runoff in a soil-plant system. Such systems include bioretention areas, rain gardens, green roofs, rainwater harvesting and permeable pavement. Bioretention areas and rain gardens can be especially suited for integration into cemeteries.

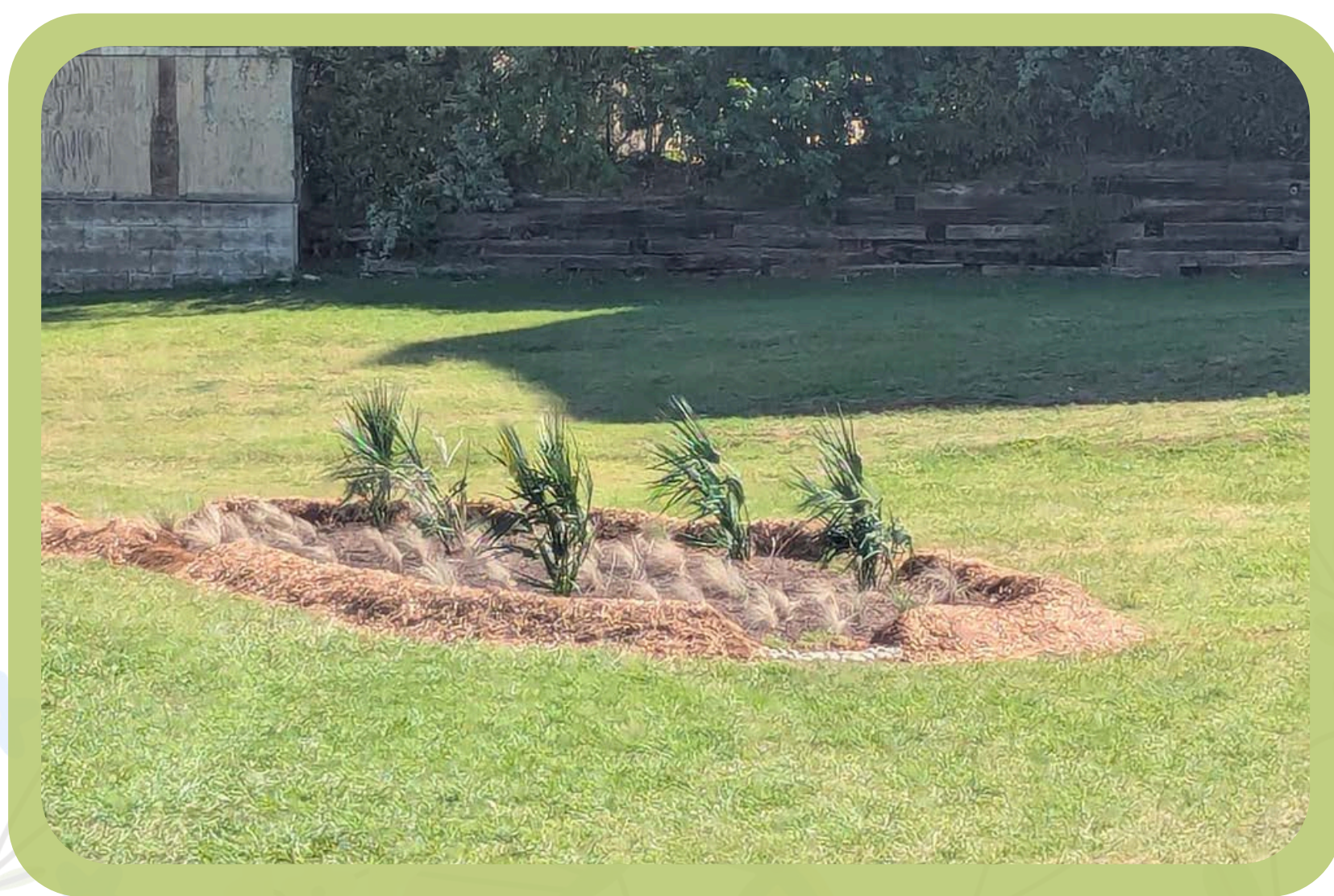
Bioretention areas are depressed areas with up to 4 feet of native soil removed and replaced by high infiltration engineered soil and planted with wet-tolerant native plants.

Bioretention areas can be integrated in the median of the cemetery parking lots or in problem areas where erosion might be occurring on the edge of the land.



Bioretention in the parking lot of the AgriLife Dallas Center (credit: AgriLife Extension)

Rain gardens are usually a 6-8 inch mulched depression also planted with wetness tolerant native plants. Both these practices reduce the volume of runoff and improve the water quality of the stormwater before it leaves the property.



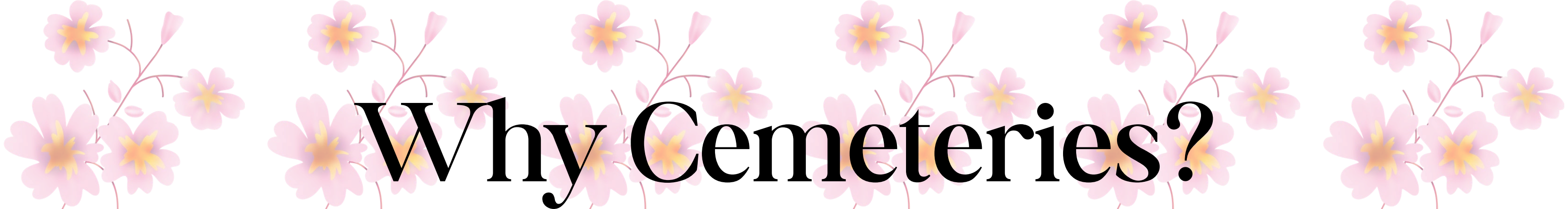
Rain garden in a park in Arlington, TX (Credit: AgriLife Extension)

During the spring and summer, these also function as beautiful landscapes that can replace non-functional non-native garden spaces.

Further Reading: For more information, visit: the
Texas A&M AgriLife Ecological Engineering
Program [1]
and Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension
Center's Urban Ecological Engineering.page [2].

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Why Cemeteries?

By Gregory LeClair, Municipal Wildlife Biologist, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and Matthew Orwat, Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Dallas County

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION can be a surprisingly productive endeavor, providing benefits for both wildlife and people. Using native plants is perhaps the simplest and most effective way to bring substantial ecological value back to an area that has been developed; these plants serve as food and shelter for a variety of wildlife species, offer resilience to pests, provide green space for human mental and physical health, and offer shade and other services that significantly reduce cooling and maintenance costs for existing structures.

Of the many developed areas that are available for ecological restoration, cemeteries are often overlooked. Cemeteries can be surprisingly productive habitat resources if managed appropriately; in many cases, they represent areas that are either early successional, such as prairies (benefitting grassland species) and savannahs or even forests that are subject to natural forest fires (an increasingly rare type of habitat). The latter involves several large thriving trees interspersed in a meadow, and cemetery mowing regimes can often mimic the cadence of fires that once occurred in much of central and east Texas.

As a result, some species that depend on fire may thrive here and few other places. One of these is a prairie and meadow plant with deep pink flowers known as winecup mallow (*Callerhoe involucrata*), which seems tailor made for cemeteries, since it thrives in areas with semi-regular mowing when set at 4” or higher, and in areas without artificial irrigation. Winecup mallow is the host plant of the grey hairstreak butterfly and the red winecup weevil.

Other species often thrive in cemeteries, too. Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) and other frugivorous birds have been observed in cemeteries to eat fruit from and disperse seeds of planted trees and native grasses. A variety of native moths – vital to pollination and other ecosystem functions – have been observed to use native oaks and other trees as host plants and nurseries. Cemetery wetlands host reptile and amphibian species, providing a safe location amid the ever-changing and sometimes hostile urban environment. Surrounding soil and trees provide excellent foraging areas for bats, woodpeckers and nightjars. Birds of prey, such as the yellow crowned night heron and red shouldered hawk have been observed thriving in Constellation of Living Memorial project cemeteries.

Of course, the variety of species that find sanctuary in these cemeteries depends on multiple factors; the maintenance schedule, the size and arrangement of the cemetery and its features, and whether they're connected to other open spaces. These issues could be addressed in open space plans, which more towns are producing to meet conservation, recreation, and cultural goals.

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Cemeteries as Spaces with a Deep Connection to the Community



By Tyler Refsland, Manager of Applied Ecology, Wild Seed Project, and Matthew Orwat, Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Dallas County

REPOPULATING OUR landscapes with native plants is a practical way to expand wildlife habitat and support biodiversity. Texas's native species of trees, shrubs, vines, wildflowers, grasses, and ferns have grown in our region for millennia, serving as the foundation of local food webs that support thousands of native animal species.

During this long history of co-existence, many native species became mutually dependent on one another for pollination, seed dispersal, food, and shelter—relationships that non-native turfgrass and ornamental plants cannot replicate.

With the ongoing threats of habitat loss and climate change, welcoming native plants back into spaces like cemeteries can help stitch together remaining habitats and provide corridors for wildlife to forage and reproduce. Cemeteries planted with native shrubs, milkweed, asters, and goldenrods provide a season-long supply of food for numerous pollinators, including bumble bees, solitary bees, butterflies, and beetles.

Welcoming Wildlife

Cemeteries present a unique opportunity for native wildlife habitat expansion by diversifying these spaces with native plants. With less maintenance and input needs, native plants can also help free up funds and volunteers for other priorities.

Building Climate Resilience

The non-native turfgrass that often dominates cemetery grounds requires frequent maintenance to survive, including routine mowing and applications of fertilizer and pesticides. These inputs are not only costly and labor-intensive, but they cause air and noise pollution in service of cultivating an untenable landscape—a monoculture lawn with reduced wildlife value that is increasingly vulnerable to climate change. Native plants, by contrast, are far more self-sustaining and require significantly less maintenance once established. Being adapted to our local soil and climate conditions, native plants thrive without the need for winter protection, supplemental water, fertilizers, or pesticides. Diverse plantings are also much more resilient to climate extremes, pests, and pathogens, because if one species succumbs to stress, there are others that can thrive in its place.

Reconnecting Communities to Place

Perhaps most powerfully, native plants help visitors reconnect with the beauty of place. This may come in many forms, from observing migrating monarchs and songbirds to familiarizing oneself with the seasonality of spring ephemerals, summer blooms, and autumn seedheads. Such nature-based experiences can help us return to the present and celebrate our place in the patterns of life.

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Let it Grow

North Central Texas Style

By Christopher Morris, Sr. Environmental Coordinator,
City of Dallas Biologist

ONCE YOU'VE picked out the native North Central Texas plants you want to nurture—your little bluestem, Indian blanket, purple coneflower, and all those hardy prairie friends—there are a few steps that can help them truly take root in our climate.

A good starting point is choosing the right mowing routine for your cemetery or green space. Across much of Texas, mowing native areas once or twice a year in the dormant season works beautifully. Letting the landscape grow tall—especially from late spring through early fall—gives our prairie plants the time they need to bloom, set seed, and support the wildlife that depends on them. Cutting during the growing season can interrupt nesting birds, disturb pollinators, and prevent plants from completing their life cycle.



When it is time to mow, consider doing it in sections on a multi-year rotation. That way, wildlife doesn't lose all its cover at once. Leaving at least one area unmown through the winter is especially helpful; many insects and small animals overwinter in the dried grasses and stems. These standing plants also help slow down stormwater and reduce soil erosion—something our clay soils appreciate after a good Texas thunderstorm.

As more of the cemetery transitions into native prairie or wildflower meadow, you'll find that mowing becomes less frequent overall, freeing up time for staff and volunteers.

Different native species have different tolerances for mowing, so it's worth looking up the needs of the plants you're working with. Many organizations (Native Prairie Association of Texas and The Nature Conservancy) provide species-specific guidance on ideal mowing schedules.



That said, mowing less isn't always the right choice. Some rare Texas plant communities—like certain fire-dependent prairies or savanna remnants—may benefit from more frequent disturbance when fire isn't an option. If you're unsure what's best for your site, your local Texas Parks & Wildlife biologist or county extension office can help you determine the right approach.

Further Reading: Different plants have varying tolerances for mowing; you can find information on specific species online. For example, “Save Your Yard” [3] by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is a great resource for converting traditional lawn to native plants.



Beeman Cemetery

Christopher Morris, Sr. Environmental
Coordinator, City of Dallas Biologist

AT JJ BEEMAN CEMETERY, historically the City of Dallas Park and Recreation Department and contractors mow and maintain the park. Mostly populated with turf species, it is kept short to allow access to the markers and headstones. The Stewards' long-term vision is to shift that approach so mowing focuses mainly on the path edges and borders—the stretches between walkways, fences and headstones—so visitors can easily reach the memorials without stripping the whole landscape down. In addition, the removal of encroaching invasive species such as Ligustrum, Nandina, Bamboo and Amur Honeysuckle allows space for native grasses to recharge the area. The goal is to limit mowing to once in late June, after our spring and early-summer wildflowers have dropped their seeds, and then again in the fall/winter once the autumn bloomers have done the same.



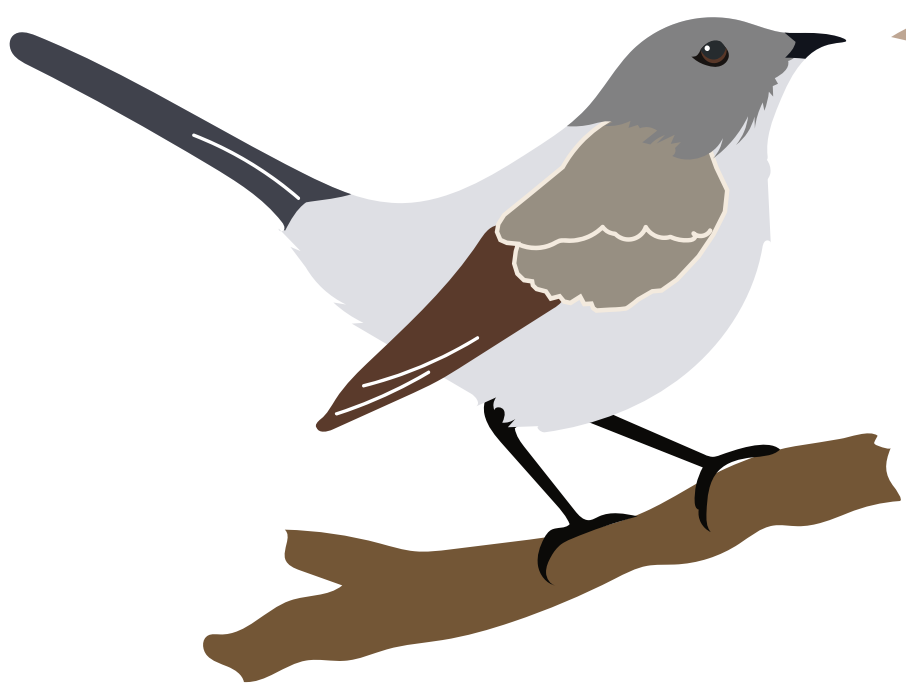
Beeman CLM volunteers mark selected restoration area at the Beeman Memorial Cemetery - Dallas, Tx.

This timing supports the natural rhythm of North Central Texas prairie plants (Native Plant Society of Texas [4]), which rely on a full growing season to reseed and spread. Invasives like Johnson Grass, *Sorghum halepense*, proliferate in the hotter months, so a mow before July can stop it from going to seed.

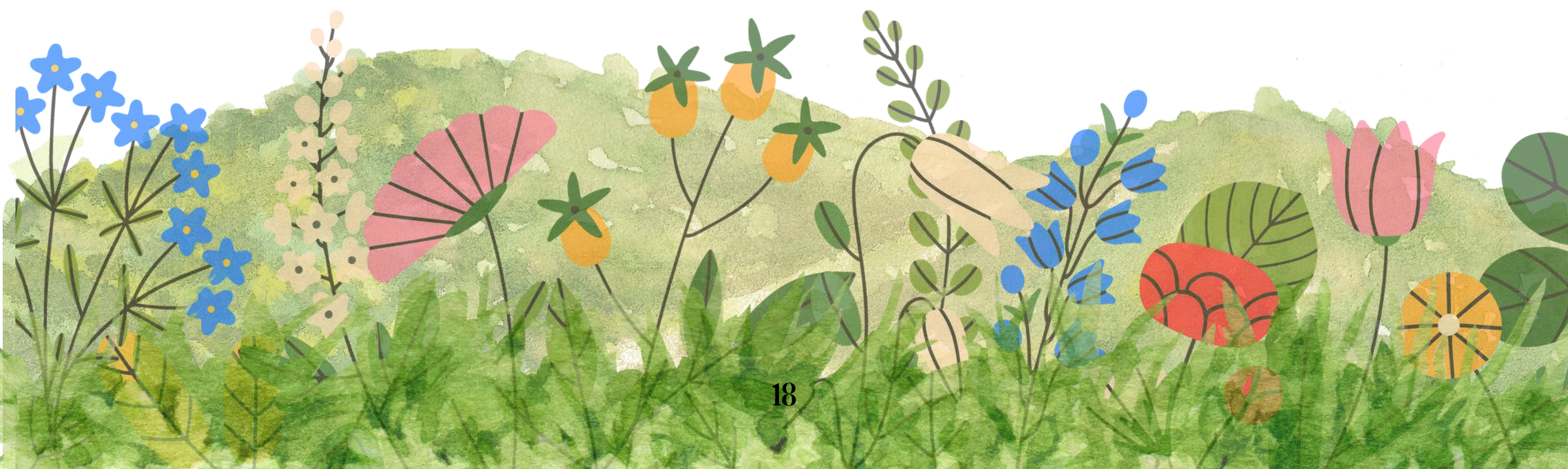
To make this possible, the Stewards plan to replace the traditional turf in the cemetery with low-growing native perennial plants that stay tidy, don't need mowing, and can handle our heat, clay soils, and long dry spells. Over time, this shift will reduce maintenance needs while creating a healthier, more resilient landscape that reflects the natural heritage of the region.

Lists of invasive species in Texas: Texas Invasives [5]

Chemical applications – need license: Texas Agriculture [6]



The plant matter leftover from mowing can be used as mulch or compost, but make sure you don't compost the berries of invasive plants! You might accidentally plant them.



IT'S VERY beneficial to leave fallen leaves and pine needles on the ground at your cemetery. While you'll need to clear them off the paths for accessibility, try to move them to another part of the meadow rather than removing them entirely. Leaf litter contributes essential nutrients to the soil and provides a habitat for small creatures. Raking, and especially leaf-blowing, can be disruptive and damaging to the the underlying life. If you are worried about leaf litter smothering your ground cover, pay attention to where leaves naturally accumulate and plant stronger-stemmed plants there. Leave the leaves as much as possible and you will have healthier, moister, and more productive soil.

Further Reading: [Leave the Leaves!](#) [7] by Anna Fialkoff of Wild Seed Project





Cemeteries as Wildlife Refugia in the Urban Ecosystem



By Sam Kieschnick, DFW Urban Wildlife Biologist, Texas
Parks & Wildlife Department

WHEN THINKING of wilderness or nature preserves, one would normally envision large wild places like Yellowstone or Yosemite far away from the noise and traffic of a city. However, even in the middle of a large urban metroplex like Dallas, wildlife thrives! This urban ecosystem is a mosaic of gray and green spaces. Gray spaces are made up of buildings, schools, churches, markets, and roads connecting them all. The green spaces are parks, golf courses, yards, and in this case, cemeteries. These green spaces are united by wild corridors like creeks, drainage ditches, culverts, floodplains, and even vacant lots. Urban wildlife thrives in these areas, and cemeteries are crucially important as urban refugia.

Oakland Cemetery [8] is a relatively large (47 acres) cemetery close to downtown Dallas. It obviously preserves the cultural history of the people of Dallas, but it also acts as an archive of natural history. Some of the habitats found here are remnants of the blackland prairie and cross timbers. Old post oak trees and sections of little bluestem constitute the landscape. Wildlife is abundant at Oakland Cemetery!

A large volunteer group, the North Texas Master Naturalists, have dedicated countless hours to preserving and documenting this biodiversity and providing habitat management guidance. This chapter became aware of Oakland Cemetery through a 2024 and 2025 student Class project developed as part of a Constellation of Living Memorials (CLM) 6 month project with the Native Texas Master Naturalist North Texas chapter, carried out with the chapter's approval and in partnership. This pathway illustrates the “breadcrumb effect” CLM is designed to create—where education sparks awareness, awareness leads to engagement, and engagement grows into stewardship—especially when CLM works in collaboration with trusted partners such as Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, the Native Plant Society of Texas, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The mission of the Texas Master Naturalists is to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas. The North Texas Master Naturalist chapter is one of the largest in the state with around 400 active members, and their projects span the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex.

They work with municipalities doing adult and child nature programs, create nature trails in various parks, guide management of invasive species and cultivate native plants. They are active citizen scientists, collecting data that is used by public land managers and policy makers thus providing service in a cornucopia of ways for the public.

At Oakland Cemetery, a large group of volunteers have been actively documenting the wildlife within the cemetery grounds. They utilize the tool of iNaturalist, a citizen science network and database, that uses photo vouchers to document species richness. Prior to 2024, only around 50 species had been documented through iNaturalist at Oakland Cemetery. Throughout 2024, master naturalists and citizen scientists documented over 1000 species [9] at Oakland Cemetery. The next year, these citizen scientists documented another 700 unique taxa and now, Oakland Cemetery is seen as a hot spot of biodiversity in Dallas county. Biodiversity begets biodiversity, so an abundance of plants leads to an abundance of insects. The abundance of insects leads to an abundance of insect eaters like birds and mammals. As the organisms die, the nutrients get cycled by the decomposers and fungi, adding nutrients to the soil for more plant growth.

Of these 1700 unique taxa, around 350 plant species have been documented as well as 55 vertebrate animals like birds, mammals, and reptiles. Most of the other organisms documented are arthropods. Around 1200 species of insects, spiders, centipedes, and millipedes call the habitat in this cemetery “home”. Species diversity may not seem like a relevant metric to collect; however, these organisms provide a crucially important ecosystem service. They clean the air and water. They make the area cooler. They’re pest control and natural weed removal. They also provide an intrinsic joy of going into nature. What’s better than hearing a bird sing and watching a butterfly flutter about?

This natural history also requires a different kind of habitat management. Some of the species documented at Oakland are not native to the area. These invasive species cause ecological damage by outcompeting native species and reducing biodiversity. In this area, privet (*Ligustrum* species), *Nandina*, and old-world grasses are the major challenges. Volunteers have removed several of these plants mechanically and replacing these spots with native plants.



Oakland Cemetery CLM Public Health Director May Rigby documents a sea of Black-eyed Susans at Oakland Cemetery, where a remnant prairie was discovered only after mowing had stopped.

A “hands off” approach to wildlife habitat management is not viable here. These habitats require a different kind of management. Seasonal (summer and winter) mowing of these natural areas can be utilized to control some of these invasives. Too much mowing or mowing that is too close to the ground can be detrimental to the landscape so raising mowing height to 4 inches or above is crucial. Some public areas are maintained with easier access and lower turf, but designated wildlife habitat areas are managed as prairies and oak forests.

Oakland Cemetery is such a wonderful refuge in the urban ecosystem. Not only does nature seek refuge here, but so does the growing community of nature enthusiasts that live in or visit the city. It is an essentially important part of the urban ecosystem of Dallas/Fort Worth.

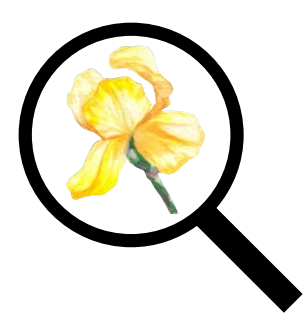
sam.kieschnick@tpwd.texas.gov



Controlling Invasives



MANY CEMETERIES already have an established invasion. In that case, don't despair! There are still effective ways to manage and reduce the spread. With repeated effort, it's possible to reclaim and restore affected areas.



Identification

The first step to managing your invasives is identifying them. You can start with your own knowledge, ask a local expert, or use a plant ID app like iNaturalist or PlantNet. If you'd like a second opinion, you can submit a photo and details to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension using [this link](#) [10]. Once you've identified the plant, check if it's invasive using the [Texas Invasive Species List](#) [11] from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. You simply search a plant name, and if it comes up, it is considered invasive. From there, you can open up a factsheet on the plant and start planning your management approach.

Further Reading: A [list of resources](#) for plant identification from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension [12]. If you want to keep track of the invasives on your site, check out [Texas Invasives](#) [13], a free web-based map and database for invasive species management in Texas.



Management

There are generally three categories that invasive plant management falls into: mechanical, chemical, and biological. Below is a brief overview of the benefits and potential drawbacks of each method.

Mechanical



Examples: cutting/mowing, digging up, pulling plants

✓ Pros

- No special licensing
- Doesn't require the use of chemicals

✗ Cons

- Very labor-intensive and time-consuming
- Significantly disturbs soil, which can create conditions for reinvasion

Chemical



Examples: spraying herbicide, painting/injecting cut stems

✓ Pros

- Resource- and cost-efficient
- Very effective on widespread or stubborn invasions

✗ Cons

- Often requires using a Licensed Pesticide Applicator
- May be prohibited or strictly regulated depending on landowner / board decisions and regulations
- Special handling considerations for environmental and applicator safety

Biological



Examples: introducing an invasive's natural predators, such as specific diseases or insects, to control a target population



Pros

- Self-sustaining long-term solution if done correctly
- Uses nature's own methods of maintaining equilibrium



Cons

- Risk of affecting non-target plants
- Requires lots of planning, research, and professional help

Further Reading: Invasive species management and control from the [Texas Invasive Species Institute](#) [14].

NOW THAT you have reviewed the different methods of invasive plant control, you can begin deciding which strategies for management are appropriate.



Hidden in Plain Sight

Garrett Boone, Co-Founder Container Store,
Greening Czar of Dallas

WHEN JULIE and her husband Lee found the house of their dreams in East Dallas, they hesitated. On the corner next door sat the long neglected Warren Ferris Cemetery, foreboding, overgrown, and damaged. Broken tree limbs, trash, invasive weeds, and unmanaged growth made it a place neighbors avoided and quietly wished would disappear. But they loved the house, so they bought it anyway.

Over time, Julie learned to see beyond what was visible. What others perceived as blight, she began to recognize as possibility, an opportunity to restore and revitalize a forgotten historic landscape.

Through the removal of

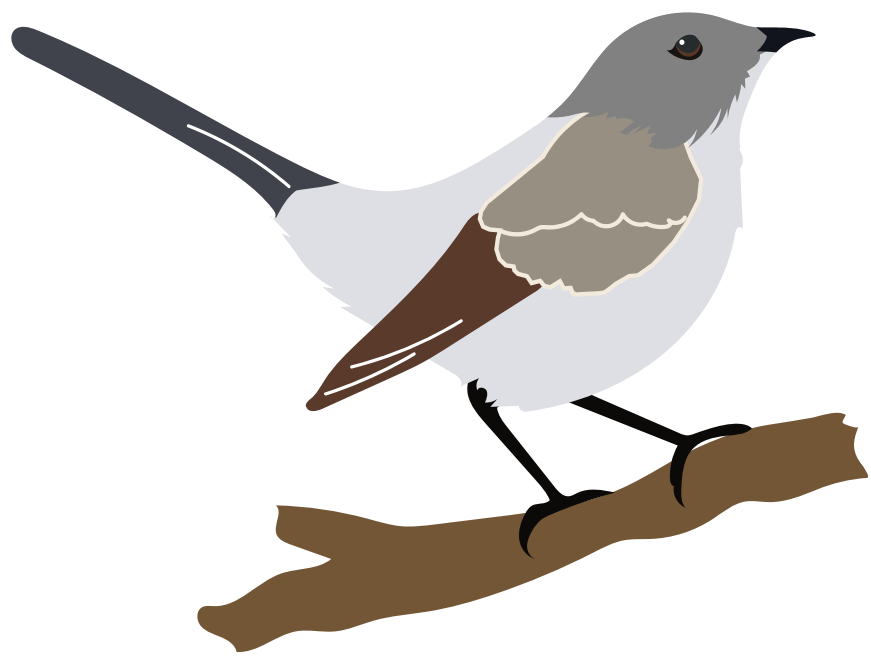
trash and invasive species and the reintroduction of native plants, the land slowly began to heal. Pollinators and birds returned. Neighbors who once looked away began to gather, work together, and reconnect with the place and with one another.



Warren Cemetery, a stop on the annual White Rock Lake Garden Tour-- a neighborhood opportunity to highlight the historical and natural significance of the grounds.

From this successful proof of concept, the rejuvenation of Warren Ferris Cemetery, the Constellation of Living Memorials, CLM, was born. CLM has since grown into a forum for people of all ages to work with what already exists in historic cemeteries, honoring the past in the present for the future. Its growth has been strengthened through key partnerships, including Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

CLM touched my heart because its work mirrors what we at Greenspace Dallas have been doing for the past twelve years, identifying overlooked land, removing decades of neglect, and restoring access to nature. Whether along the Trinity River corridor, within Dallas's 700 miles of creeks, or on vacant city parcels, these places, like historic cemeteries, are hidden in plain sight, waiting to be seen, restored, and shared.



If you are digging up soil to remove invasives, consider getting your soil tested through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. All you need is a soil test kit (available at any Extension office), and you can send your soil sample to the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Soil, Water and Forage Testing Laboratory. [15]. You'll receive information on pH, organic matter level, management tips, and more!



New Life



IF YOU want to go above and beyond simply managing invasives and letting native plants grow back on their own, consider planting new native species! This is an exciting next step in your cemetery management journey, and there are many factors to consider to ensure the plants you choose are well-suited to thrive in your local ecosystem.



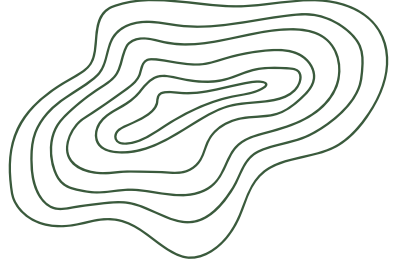
People Power



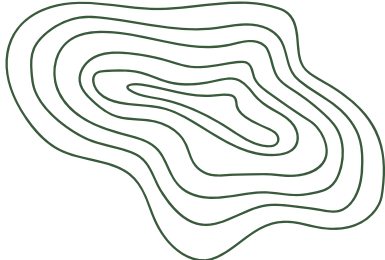
Before planting, it's important to consider how much volunteer labor you have access to and how consistent that help will be. Even native plants require care, especially early on and during dry spells, so it's best to plant only what you know can be maintained. Avoid taking on too much at once or choosing too many species that need frequent watering. Keep in mind that trees and shrubs will require more labor during planting due to their weight and the larger holes they need.

Water

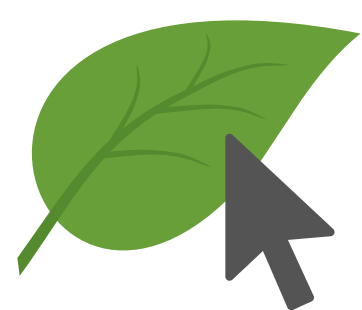
Do you have access to water? Some cemeteries don't have a water line, which means you'll need to bring in water yourself. In some cases, a nearby neighbor may be willing to share access. When planning new plantings, consider not only the availability of water but also the effort required to transport and apply it.



Topography



Take note of where the slopes and low points of your cemetery are. Slopes can be challenging to water effectively, while low areas may collect runoff and receive more water than the plants there need. Steeper slopes may also be more affected by erosion, so you might consider adding ground cover or deep-rooted plants to stabilize the soil.



The Plant Finder

Check out the Native Plant Society of [Texas Native Plant Database](#) [16] to find native plants for your site! There are several filters you can use to find the perfect plant for your goals.

Find the Perfect Texas Native Plant for Your Landscape

Use the filters below to search for plants for [your ecoregion](#) and growing conditions. Click on the name of each plant to view more detailed information. This database contains plants readily available at [native plant nurseries](#) in your area. It is not meant to provide an exhaustive list of Texas native plants. If you have a question about the Native Plant Database [send us an email](#). Help us improve and provide feedback using [this form](#).

+ Useful Saved Native Plant Searches

+ Other Native Plant Resources

Soil Type

The Texas Native Plant Database has an option to input your soil type. If you're not sure what your soil type is, you can either get your soil tested (see page 25) or check out the [Web Soil Survey](#) [17]. Just locate your cemetery on the map using the site's navigation tools, draw a box around your area of interest (AOI), and the tool will provide your soil type along with lots of other useful information.

Height

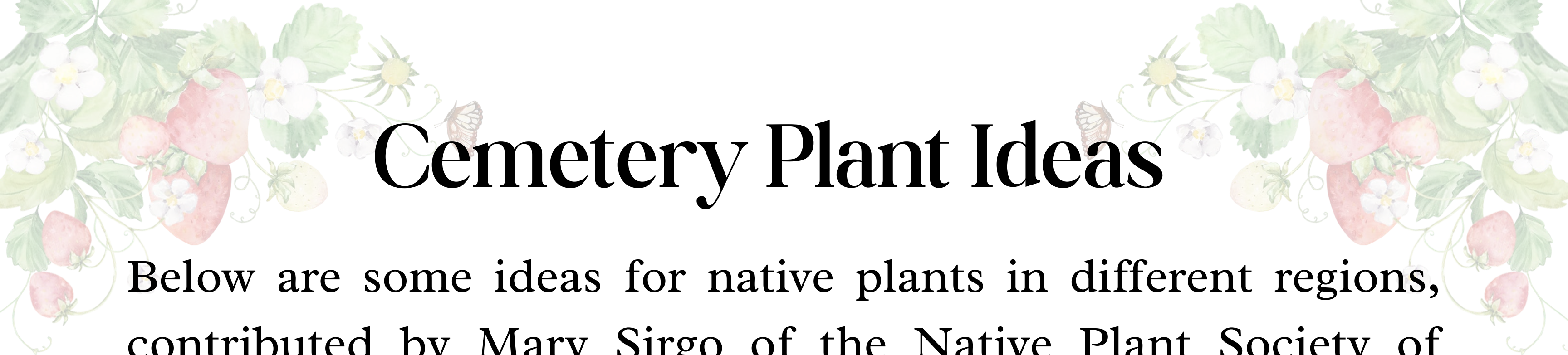
You can also input a minimum and maximum height when searching for plants. This is a great tool for cemetery planting, as it allows you to select low-growing ground covers in areas where you want to keep monuments visible. In open areas without monuments, you can plant wildflower strips with taller species, and around the perimeter, consider adding native trees. Using this filter helps you plan your cemetery landscape thoughtfully, based on where you want the visual focus to be.



Climate Resilience



By planting native species, you're already supporting both your local ecosystem and the long-term health of your cemetery. To ensure your landscaping efforts remain resilient and continue benefiting your community well into the future, consider choosing plants that can adapt to changing climate conditions. Look for species that are drought-tolerant, can withstand waterlogging, and thrive across a broad range of hardiness zones.



Cemetery Plant Ideas

Below are some ideas for native plants in different regions, contributed by Mary Sirgo of the Native Plant Society of Texas!

East/North Texas

Wildflowers: Bergamot; Black-eyed Susan; Claspig Coneflower; Gayfeather; Illinois Bundleflower; Indian Blanket; Lanceleaf Coreopsis; Lemon Mint; Partridge Pea; Pink Evening Primrose; Rattlesnake Master; Standing Cypress

Grasses & Groundcover: Inland Sea Oats, Slender Woodoats, Straggler Daisy, Texas Frogfruit

Shade: Flowering Dogwood, Texas Wisteria, Scarlet Sage, Heartleaf Skullcap

Sun: Blue Mistflower, Lanceleaf Coreopsis, Asters (various); Yaupon Holly, Dwarf Palmetto

North Texas

Wildflowers: Black-eyed Susan; Claspig Coneflower; Indian Blanket; Lanceleaf Coreopsis; Lemon Mint; Mexican Hat; Plains Coreopsis; Prairie Coneflower; Texas Bluebonnet; Purple Prairie Clover; Huisache Daisy

Grasses & Groundcover: Little Bluestem; Sideoats Grama; Texas Frogfruit; Trailing Ratany

Shade: Black Willow; Agarita; Yellow Prairie Flax; Chocolate Daisy

Sun: Blackfoot Daisy; Yellow Evening Primrose; Milkweed; White Sage; Scarlet Globemallow

Central/West Texas

Wildflowers: American Basketflower; Blue Flax; Bush Sunflower; Cowpen Daisy; Engelmann's Daisy; Gayfeather; Greenthread; Indian Blanket; Plains Coreopsis; Prairie Verbena; Standing Cypress; Texas Bluebonnet

Grasses & Groundcover: Little Bluestem; Buffalo Grass; Texas Frogfruit; Maidenhair Fern

Shade: Eastern Cottonwood; Aromatic Sumac; Pigeonberry; Wild Petunia

Sun: Four-nerve Daisy; Scarlet Muskflower; Winecup; Prairie Acacia; Flame Acanthus

Coastal Texas

Wildflowers: American Basketflower; Black-eyed Susan; Claspig Coneflower; Cowpen Daisy; Engelmann's Daisy; Illinois Bundleflower; Marsh Elder; Partridge Pea; Plains Coreopsis; Prairie Goldenrod

Grasses & Groundcover: Bushy Bluestem; Southwestern Bristlegrass; Powderpuff Mimosa; Straggler Daisy

Shade: Black Willow; Coralberry; Scarlet Sage; Frostweed

Sun: Mistflower; Azure Sage; Snakeherb; Dwarf Palmetto; Coralbean



Further Reading:

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center – “Reimagine the Lawn” [18]

Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) publications & plant resources [19]

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension - “Plants for Texas Landscapes” [20]

Native American Seed Texas native grasses, wildflowers, and restoration seed mixes [21]

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center - “Native Plant Database” [21]

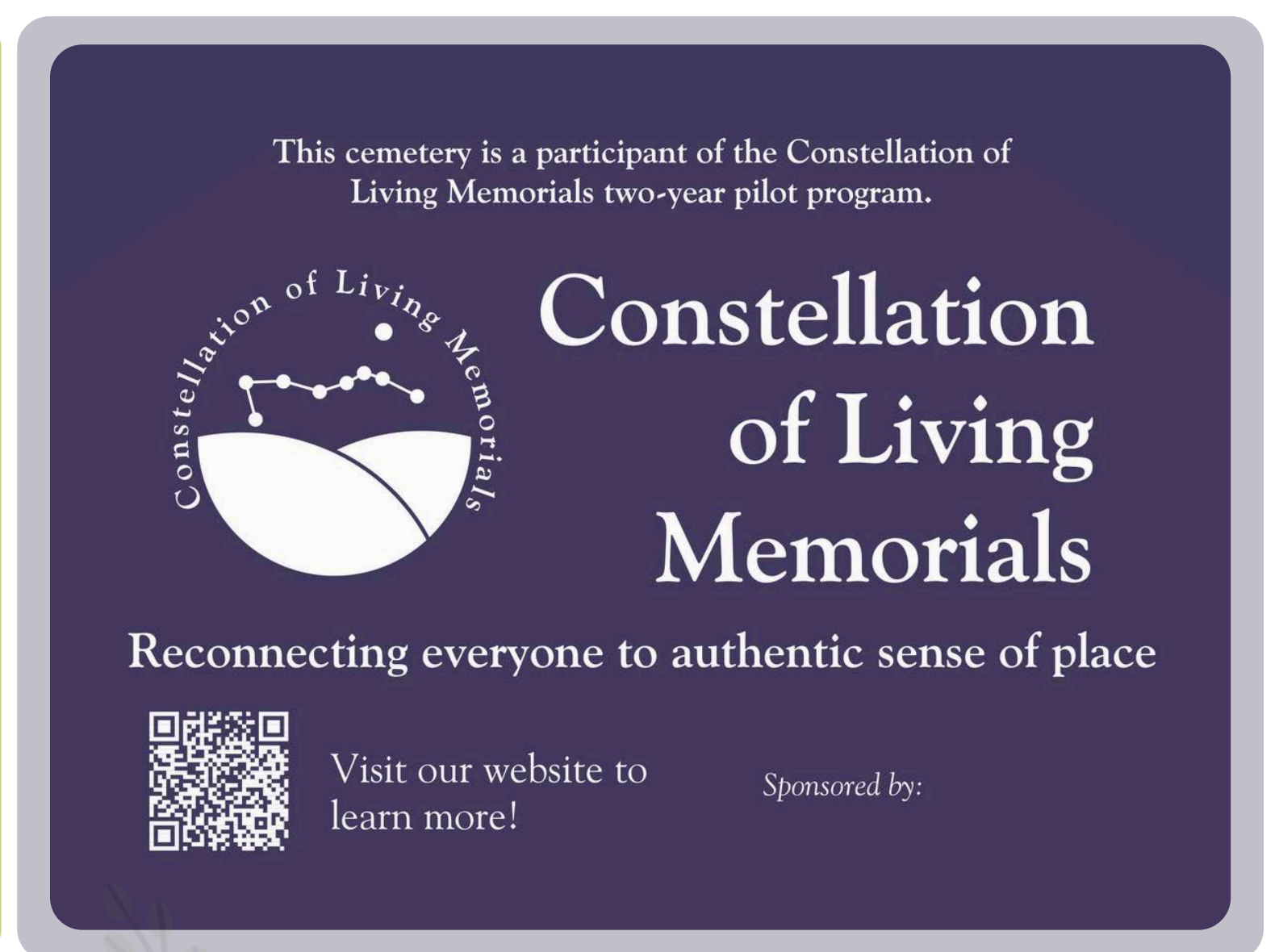
Native Plant Society of Texas - “Where to Buy Native Plants” (NICE! Program) [22]





Informing the Public

GOOD SIGNAGE can make the difference between communities being skeptical or fully supportive. Allowing native landscaping and vegetation to grow out may create a risk of an overgrown or neglected perception. Installing clear, informative signage that informs on the intentional and beneficial nature of the project alleviates such concerns. The Constellation of Living Memorials has produced effective interpretive signage for the cemeteries they work with. Below are some examples to use as inspiration. If you're interested in installing CLM signage in your own cemetery, see pages 34-35 to learn about joining the Constellation!



Further Reading: Check out more signage [here](#) [24].



Building Community

By Julie Fineman, Founder of the Constellation of Living Memorials

THE CONSTELLATION of Living Memorials reimagines historic cemeteries as living, vibrant spaces—places where communities reconnect with nature, honor the past, and nurture a deeper bond between those living and those who came before.

As a dynamic connector, the Constellation empowers each cemetery group to tap into their existing local networks, engaging volunteers from organizations like Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, Rotary, 4-H, Eagle Scouts, Girl Scouts, ROTC, and corporate volunteer programs. This collaborative approach creates a powerful synergy for service, stewardship, and lasting environmental and cultural impact.

Support from local benefactors and corporate partners fuels this transformation. Their contributions help fund grants that enable each cemetery to restore its landscape, removing invasive species, purchasing non-motorized tools for sustainable maintenance, planting native flora to revitalize the ecosystem, and passive educational signage throughout the landscape to awaken guests to embrace new landscape management practices.

Don't be afraid to think boldly and ask for support—your local community will recognize the value of this paradigm shift and take pride in being part of something that honors history while building a more regenerative future.

Join the Constellation

By Julie Fineman, Founder of the Constellation of Living Memorials

REMEMBER HISTORY. RESTORE NATURE. RECONNECT COMMUNITY.

What if your historic neighborhood cemetery could become a place where history is remembered, nature is restored, and the community reconnects?

The Constellation of Living Memorials (CLM) is a Dallas-based nonprofit helping historic cemeteries transform into thriving, climate-resilient landscapes through ecological restoration and community engagement.

CLM partners with cemeteries to:

- Restore native landscapes
- Remove invasive species
- Conduct flora and fauna surveys
- Preserve and repair historic headstones
- Create peaceful, climate-resilient green spaces that serve both people and wildlife

As a member of the Constellation, your cemetery receives:

- Expert ecological guidance and technical support
- Access to a growing network of cemetery leaders and volunteers
- Funding opportunities through the CLM Grant Program
- Educational resources and proven restoration practices
- Recognition as part of a statewide movement reimagining historic cemeteries

Together, we are creating living memorials that honor the past while restoring nature for future generations.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

The Constellation of Living Memorials is expanding and seeking to partner with historic cemeteries across the United States.

Be part of a growing movement that remembers history by restoring nature, strengthens communities through environmental healing, and transforms sacred spaces into living landscapes for generations to come.

Let your cemetery become the next star in the ever-growing Constellation.

Learn more and connect with us at www.ConstellationofLivingMemorials.org



Links

- [1] <https://agrillife.org/lid>
- [2] <https://dallas.tamu.edu/urban-%20ecological-engineering/>
- [3] <https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/water-education/stateofwater/yard>
- [4] <https://www.npsot.org/posts/8-native-north-texas-grasses-to-simplify-your-landscaping/>
- [5] <https://texasinvasives.org>
- [6] <https://texasagriculture.gov>
- [7] <https://wildseedproject.net/blog/leave-the-leaves>
- [8] <https://oaklandcemeterydallas.com>
- [9] https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?place_id=I52355&subview=map&__cf_chl_f_tk=AahrDL9ehr4iFILnDRsJCmOMemotFobihyxs3vtdyPI-I782789I5I-I.O.I.I-u2qiOumoEililIzDQEjk5VQVRFqJ9FOJ9VZe3seyvHI
- [10] <https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/contact-us/>
- [11] <https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/resources/keep-texas-wild/alien-invaders/texas-most-unwanted-plants-and-animals>
- [12] <https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/>
- [13] https://www.texasinvasives.org/invasives_database/

- [14]
<https://www.texasinvasives.org/professionals/management.php>
- [15] <https://soiltesting.tamu.edu>
- [16] <https://www.npsot.org/resources/native-plants/native-plants-database/>
- [17]
<https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>
- [18] <https://www.wildflower.org/reimagine-the-lawn>
- [19] <https://www.npsot.org/resources/>
- [20] <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/planning-the-home-landscape/plants/>
- [21] <https://seedsource.com>
- [22] <https://www.wildflower.org/plants/>
- [23] <https://www.npsot.org/our-work/nice-native-plant-partners/>
- [24]
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/IdUwUKKYVRIW_koMSwOGe3B5VW9NeOytM

We extend our sincere thanks to the University of Maine for its leadership in developing the original template that guided the creation of the CLM Guide for Maine. Their work established a clear and effective framework that has enabled Maine and other states to advance consistent, high-quality CLM guidance. Julie Fineman, Louisa Kaplan, Jessica Leahy, Angela Wotton, Kacey Weber.



Constellation
Living Memorials

