



## March 2017 Newsletter

Welcome to the Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas (FSANA) e-newsletter! We share natural areas news, the Friends' efforts, and opportunities to get involved in volunteering or educational programs at San Antonio's natural areas parks. Going forward, we aim to bring you this newsletter quarterly in 2017, at minimum. Please check our website, [www.fosana.org](http://www.fosana.org), for periodic updates.

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### Flowering in Nature: A) Male, B) Female, C) All of the Above

Vernal Equinox—the official start to spring this year—is not until March 20, 2017 (5:29 am Central Daylight Time, to be exact). But everywhere we go, it is evident that spring is here: Texas mountain laurels (*Sophora secundiflora*) are blooming (mostly purple, but occasionally you may see pink or white ones as well), first of season white-eyed vireos (*Vireo griseus*) are in, and those early blooming wildflowers, the anemones (*Anemone heterophylla*), are popping up.

Soon, just being outside may overwhelm your senses, so while things are still in the “unfolding” phase, take a close look at our flowering woody plants. If you do this, you may notice some species are dioecious; that is, some plants have only male flowers, while others of the same species have only female flowers. For example, with the help of a magnifying glass, look at the flowers of *Forestiera pubescens* (also called elbowbush, spring herald, and stretchberry), and you will see only male flowers on some plants and only female flowers on others (see [this link](#) for some great pictures of male and female plants). Other examples of local dioecious plants include the yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) and ashe juniper (*Juniperus ashe*).

By the way, live oaks (*Quercus fusiformis*) and Texas redbuds (*Cercis canadensis var. texensis*) are examples of monoecious woody plants (they have male flowers and female flowers on the same individual).

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### Forest Therapy

If you are indoors for your work that requires long hours of sitting and focusing on a computer screen, it is time to indulge in a walk in the forest. Many studies have shown that natural environments have many positive effects. Specific natural environments such as forests and wooded areas have been recognized by a [study in Japan](#) to show that participants who walked about 20 minutes in the forest had lower concentrations of cortisol, a stress hormone, lower pulse rate and lower blood pressure. The term “Shirin-yoku,” introduced by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries in 1982, means taking in the forest atmosphere and is often referred to as “forest bathing.”



*A Crownridge Canyon Natural Area trail, perfect for a forest walk.*

The natural areas and other parks in San Antonio offer many opportunities to enjoy and appreciate the sights, sounds and smells of nature. Sign up for a guided hike offered each first Saturday, and then walk the many miles of trails to sense the natural world of the trees, birds and animals of the forest. Take time to look for spring flowers and appreciate the changing seasons. The Association of Nature and Forest Therapy has guidelines to incorporate a walk in the forest as a healing activity to include listening and quiet. While many of us go the forest for exercise to hike and run, a short cool down period could be the therapy that slows you down to listen to the sound of a stream or wind rustling through the trees. Forests also have positive psychological benefits in addition to the physiological effect of relaxation. A bonus feature of Forest Therapy is that it is available to all throughout the year.

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## Upcoming Events in the Natural Areas

- **First Saturday Hike: Bird Watching** (recommended for ages 10 & up)
  - 9-11 a.m. | Saturday, March 4 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
  - Explore the early signs of spring with park staff as you hone your bird watching skills. Meander along the trails in search of the first warblers of spring, and learn to identify birds by their sounds. While bringing binoculars is strongly encouraged, the park has several pairs of binoculars available to loan young birders.
  - RSVP required. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, or \$6 per family.
  - For more information, call [\(210\) 207-3782](tel:210-207-3782), or [nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov](mailto:nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov).
- **First Sundays: Tai Chi in the Natural Areas**
  - 9-10 a.m. | Sundays, March 5, April 2, May 7, June 4 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
  - Take a break from your busy week and center yourself with Tai Chi classes at Friedrich Wilderness Park. Each class provides an introduction to the practice of Tai Chi for physical and personal development. Wear comfortable, loose clothing and walking shoes.
  - RSVP by calling (210) 207-3782 or [nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov](mailto:nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov)
- **First Saturday Hike: Tree Walk** (recommended for adults)
  - 10 a.m.-12 p.m. | Saturday, April 1 | Crownridge Canyon Natural Area
  - Hike the trails of Crownridge Canyon with Texas A&M Forester, Mark Kroetze. Discover ways of identifying trees, including key features such as leaf structure, bark, canopy, flowers, fruit, and more. Following the hike will be an interactive quiz to recap concepts and tree identification.
  - RSVP required. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, or \$6 per family.

- For more information, call [\(210\) 207-3782](tel:2102073782), or [nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov](mailto:nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov).
- **First Saturday Hike: Wildflower Walk** (recommended for adults)
  - 10-12 p.m. | Saturday, May 6 | Friedrich Wilderness Park
  - Spring hiking is the best time of the year to enjoy the lush vibrancy of Texas wildflowers. Take a walk with botanist Bill Carr of Acme Botanical, and enjoy the sights and sounds of the park while learning about wildflowers of the Texas Hill Country.
  - RSVP required. Suggested donation: \$3 per person, or \$6 per family.
  - For more information, call [\(210\) 207-3782](tel:2102073782), or [nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov](mailto:nicole.mcleod@sanantonio.gov).
- **Star Party at Eisenhower Park**
  - 6-8 p.m. | Saturday, March 11 | Eisenhower Park (Mass Pavilion)
  - Join the San Antonio Astronomical Association to view stars and planets with high-tech telescopes. Hand-on activity for families included.
  - No registration required.

### Wildflower Scavenger Hunt

Here are some images of Friedrich Park wildflowers, and a word bank at the bottom. Try matching them at home,

then visit one of the natural areas for a wildflower scavenger hunt. Fun for kids (and adults!) of all ages.



1. Bluebonnet 2. Texas redbud 3. Fleabane 4. Bear grass 5. Crow poison 6. Celestial

***Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas is dedicated to promoting stewardship of San Antonio's Natural Areas, and to the understanding and appreciation of nature through educational and scientific programs.***

*For the latest updates and more activities, please see the calendar on the FSANA website.*

**[Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas Website](#)**