



July 2020 Newsletter

Welcome to the Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas (FOSANA) 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. Please check our website, www.fosana.org, for periodic updates and program information.

How Do You Spell Resilience? F-U-N-G-I

Article and photos by Jayne Neal

What do fungi have to do with resilience? Largely invisible, what we typically see are their fruiting bodies. While fruit is associated with plants, scientists believe that fungi are actually more like fauna than flora. Fungi cannot make their own food, but get it from the organic material in which they dwell. Where they live may surprise you as you may find them in the body of an ant, on your foot, in a pile of leaves, on a tree, and in numerous other places. The largest parts of a fungi are typically the hyphae, the filaments that form the fungal body or mycelium. The mycelium remains invisible until the fruiting body appears in myriad forms including mushrooms, shelves, puffballs, and truffles.

Fungi need [moisture, food and warmth to reproduce](#). With our recent cycle of wet and dry weather, yard fungi have been appearing and disappearing. Below are a couple of pictures of local mushrooms. To see other examples of our Texas mushrooms, visit Texasmushrooms.org. You will be amazed!!



Examples of non edible mushrooms you may find in your yard or neighborhood. Identification of mushrooms requires information on size, color, shape and structure of cap and stem. DO NOT eat mushrooms unless their identification is confirmed by a [mycologist](#).

However, some fungi do not do a disappearing act as the weather fluctuates between moist and arid. These fungi include the shelf or bracket types like the one pictured below.



[Shelf fungi](#) are a special kind, known as polypores because they have many pores. The pores differentiate them from many mushrooms which have gills instead of pores. The shelves or brackets characterize polypores and these are the structures where shelf fungi produce spores above ground.

The spore producing cells line the pore walls, and the spores actually must "[drop down the pore into the air](#) without sticking to the sides. The pores, as a result, are perfectly vertical. Occasionally, a shelf will continue to grow after a tree leans or falls. The new pores will be vertical, but at an angle to the old pores... Woody shelves may be several years old. They add a new layer of spore tissue every growing season. The old layer is covered by the new one."

Shelf fungi vary in color and texture. They are places of resilience as they provide specialized niches for animals, including beetles and spiders. Within a shelf, a whole food web exists. Their resilience is further evidenced by the interwoven hyphae that give them particular strength. Moreover, they do not tear or split [because](#) "there are no planes for them to split along in the tissue."

Fungi contribute to our resilience as humans. They inspire us artistically, provide spice in our lives, and have gone into space. You can find them in [paintings and sculptures](#) such as Finnish artist [Saara Alhopuro](#). They break down wood, leaves, and other materials in our yards and compost piles. Some vitamins and flavorings, the yeast bread you eat, some alcoholic drinks: all courtesy of fungi. They even have [roles in medicine](#) and [bioremediation](#).

Covid-19 in Parks

When the city imposed a strict lockdown in early March to stay at home unless working in essential services, normal social interactions came to a halt with the closing of gyms, coffee shops, bars and restaurants. We were encouraged to stay home and walk in our neighborhoods. For most people who are accustomed to going to work, the [lockdown has been stressful](#), but to cope with the lockdown it helps to be resilient, broadly defined as the ability to recover from or adjust easily from adversity. Though there are certain [traits of resilient people](#), a good way to build resilience is by [walks in nature](#) but stay with a small group and maintain a social distance from others.

Although park trails remain open, we should continue to practice social distancing and avoid groups. Walking in parks also reminds us of the resilience of ecosystems to extreme temperatures we experience in south Texas. With the exception of a few sprinkles, the past few weeks have seen little rain in Bexar county, yet the parks are blooming with several native plants that can tolerate the heat and drought. The wildflower gardens and the open grassy areas always have some flowers blooming.

A common roadside flower that is found in open areas in Friedrich Park is Indian Blanket, *Gaillardia pulchella*, also known as firewheel. This member of the Asteraceae family has a red center and a yellow outer band, and it tolerates heat and dryness well. This adaptation to continue to flower during severe droughts allowed that plant to survive in the southwest, as noted by [Bill Ward](#). He suggests that "The dry period seems to send a message to some plants that it is time to expend their energy producing abundant seeds to increase the chance that some offspring will survive, even if the drought kills off many individuals."



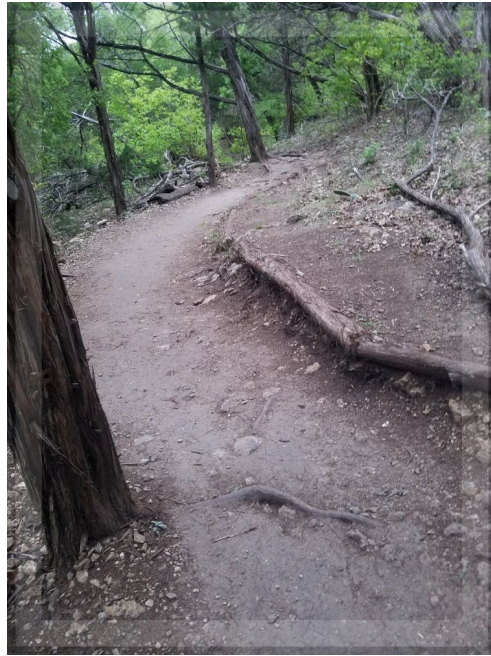
Gaillardia pulchella (photo: [Flaigg, Norman G](#))

Friedrich Park in news

Did you know that Friedrich Wilderness Park is featured in [10 Fantastic Hikes In Texas](#) by [TravelAwaits.com](#), a website that features global travel destinations. They recognize that as "...undeveloped land, this natural area offers hikers more than 10 miles of paved and unpaved trails while protecting the habitat of two endangered songbirds, the golden-cheeked warbler and the black-capped vireo".

Respect the Trails

Please stay on the trails and respect trail closure signs as volunteers and park staff have invested many hours to prevent erosion and maintain trails.



When trail users try to avoid a puddle or a muddy spot, they often go off the trail, and the trail then splits into smaller trails, a condition called ['trail braiding'](#)

Education: Making Oak Gall Ink & Nature Sketching

As the social distancing rules continue, unfortunately we cannot hold educational activities in the park. Parks and Recreation continues to post creative and engaging educational videos and hands-on activities for all ages on their [YouTube channel](#), be sure to check them out and subscribe! This week, learn how to make your own [oak gall ink](#). For your supplies, you'll need a hammer or something to crush up the oak galls, a strainer, water, a couple of rusted nails, an empty jar, and about 5-10 oak galls. The video on oak galls will walk you through steps of making your own ink and where to find oak galls. Be sure to share your final project by tagging Parks at @saparksandrec.



Oak galls



Oak Gall Ink

While we continue to practice social distancing, keeping a nature sketchbook proves to be an invaluable mental exercise as we explore areas around the neighborhood and parks nearby. At Friedrich Wilderness Park specifically, there are ample benches that allow for quiet and meditative spaces where one can write or sketch in their journals. Summer is a wonderful time to slow down and find refuge in a cooler area with ample tree canopy.

What quiet spaces can you find within a short walk from your home? Make a journal listing all of the spaces you have within a short distance from where you live. Is there water, do you have hills, or an ephemeral creek? How many types of trees can you find? When you stop and draw what is around, you'll likely notice things you never noticed before. Perhaps you'll start to notice how wildlife responds to environmental changes and seasonal changes. No surprise, many who do [nature journaling](#) are even more motivated to protect natural and wild spaces. And, of course there are numerous benefits to sharpening your observation skills. In fact, Clare Walker Leslie and Charles E. Roth who wrote [Keeping a Nature Journal](#), point out that those who observe more become more attuned to the context of objects you may have previously thought of as isolated...



Sketching at Friedrich Park



Laura's sketch

The examples below are shared by Joaquina Guevara's mom, Laura Salazar, an employee at Friedrich Wilderness Park. Laura encouraged Joaquina's nature journaling since she was three years old, always providing a new sketchbook every year. Joaquina is now a Junior at Wesleyan University in Middletown Connecticut, and we thank her for sharing her journal with us. She majors in Computer Science with a minor in Environmental Science and Film. Previously, she has volunteered with several bee programs at Friedrich.



Reflections on Nature by Joaquina Guevara



Amanita muscaria (Fly Agaric), a poisonous mushroom by Joaquina Guevara

The restrictions due to Covid-19 by the [City of San Antonio and Bexar county](#) allow people to walk outside to get exercise but maintain a safe distance of 6 ft. The contagious nature of the virus suggests that we must maintain a 'social distance' of 6 ft as it is an airborne virus and one may be infected but not show any symptoms.

It has come to our attention that people are crowding Friedrich Wilderness Park and Crownridge Canyon Natural Area, and they are doing this in a way that puts themselves, Park staff, and possibly first responders at risk. As you undoubtedly know, Friedrich and Crownridge are nature preserves that are home to wildlife, including federally listed endangered species, snakes, poison ivy, and a host of other plants and animals. The trail systems cover hundreds of acres, and some of the trails are quite remote from the entrance.

IF you feel you MUST hike on trails, keep group size very small, and ALWAYS stay on the designated trails. Failure to do so endangers yourself, others, and the ecosystem.

If you're unable to do that, enjoying nature right where you live is recommended. Discover nature in your neighborhood and you

may notice that with less traffic noise you can hear the sound of birds. Take time to identify the trees in your neighborhood with this [TAMU identification guide to trees](#).

If you see people failing to maintain 6' distance or vandalizing parks properties, please call 311 and/or the police non emergency line at 210-207-SAPD.



We hope that you will follow the recommendations of the National Recreation and Parks Association that emphasize the importance of social distancing in Park trails.

Please pick up your own trash and deposit it in trash bins at park entrance.



Thank you for helping us protect the Natural Areas and the health of our San Antonio community.

Please note that the **Big Give has been moved to September 10, 2020.**

We understand that there are many [local organizations that need immediate help](#), we would appreciate your membership and donation to [Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas](#) also.

Are you connected to San Antonio Natural Areas on social media?

You can like us on [Facebook](#).

Find us on [Instagram](#) @sanaturalareas.

Are you a member of Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas (FoSANA)?

Please support FoSANA on the preservation and educational outreach of natural areas around San Antonio by joining or renewing your membership [online](#) today.

Your membership this year will help us continue to

- offer over 400 environmental programs for families and adults at the Natural Areas.
- serve over 14,000 families and adults through education and outreach programs.
- coordinate over 400 volunteer programs and 7,500 volunteer hours supported trail maintenance, habitat conservation and restoration, and native landscapes and gardens.

Plus, when you renew your membership, you'll receive our monthly newsletter that provides updates on natural areas happenings and timely information on upcoming events. Should you need any assistance or have any questions or comments about your membership, please feel free to email us at friendsofsanaturalareas@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
FoSANA Board

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 FOSANA website.

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