

Barton Hills News

BARTON HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION



Is The Damage Done? *by Mark Gentle, BHNA President*

The rainfall in Texas during September and October 2018 was historic. The Highland Lakes turned into raging bodies of water. Houston, Dallas and South Texas were sent reeling. Austin received a city-wide boil notice. And in the neighborhood, Zilker Park was turned into a muddy mess as the load-out of the Austin City Limits Music Festival went forward despite the flood conditions. Much of this damage to Zilker Park could have and should have been avoided.

As soon as the ACL load-out was finished, I took my camera and walked along Lou Neff Road and took photographs of the site. The photos can be found on the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association website (<https://bartonhills.org/pictures/>). I showed these photos to our BHNA Executive Committee during our November 2018 meeting. We decided that we should present the photos to Ann Kitchen and her staff in a meeting to discuss what can be done to prevent this in the future. On November 14, 2018 Kyle Gray and I met with Council Member Kitchen and discussed the photos and the condition of Zilker Park. CM Kitchen indicated in the meeting that she would look into how to contain the damage going forward. We are looking forward to see the manifestation of this commitment in the coming months as the issues mature into the need for action.

The dynamic tension between protection of parkland for nature-focused visitation vs. its use for marketing and tourism is a global issue, not just a 78704 story. Protecting the ecological integrity of Austin core parkland is under relentless challenge by climate change, growth and in some cases plain old mismanagement. I am a realist with expectations shaped by 35 years of public service. While the 4 months of participating on the Zilker Park Working Group have had their challenging moments, it is essential that we stay at the table because the real work is only about to begin. The funding has been located by the City to kick off the Master Planning process for Zilker Park. This could be a 2-year process, or more. I will be writing articles on a regular basis for the website once facts are available to convey. At present, the scope of that project and its timeline are mostly just talk. But one thing is clear to me, the Master Planning Process cannot be allowed to be a can that is available for collection of pressing issues so they may be kicked down the road.



The muddy mess after ACL

NEXT MEETING

JANUARY 22, 2019

• 6-9pm •

Please join us at
St. Mark's Church

(Corner of Barton Hills Dr. & Barton Skyway)

Dinner 6pm

Torchy's Tacos \$10

**Neighborhood Meeting
7-9pm**

Barton Hills News

The Barton Hills Neighborhood Association newsletter is published quarterly and supported by sponsorships. It's distributed to homes in the Barton Hills neighborhood of Austin, Texas. For more about membership and neighborhood affairs, contact the appropriate person below.

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Newsletter printed on 100% recycled paper.

President's Message *by Mark Gentle, BHNA President*

Dear Neighbors,

At the January 2019 BHNA membership meeting I will offer my name in nomination to remain your 2019 President. The more involved I become in the Association and related neighborhood issues, the more I understand that we as a neighborhood need to maintain an active voice in the decision-making processes that affect our neighborhood.

It is my hope that in 2019 the number of active members in the Association will increase. Our Executive Committee has often discussed how to hold informal neighborhood gatherings beyond the formalities of the quarterly meetings. We plan to act on these discussions in 2019. Nothing fancy, kid friendly and in the hood, so look for it.

In the meantime, a quick update on the Zilker Park Working Group. The Group has held several meetings, mostly devoted to trying to decipher what the Council Resolution that created the group actually is intended to achieve. A close reading of that document leaves some gaps, but the Working Group is planning to press ahead, past the ambiguity. Basically, we are trying to come up with creative ideas about how to solve the parking and transportation issues in and around Zilker Park. The obvious challenge is that Zilker Park is like an island surrounded by an ocean of transportation issues.

The Work Group, in conjunction with the City of Austin, will soon send out a survey across the City to obtain feedback on usage and access to Zilker Park. Please stay tuned via the BHNA listserv and website for more information about this survey and related activities. While surveys seem like an anonymous and perhaps empty process, it turns out that official actions are often driven by the results of these tools, so care and attention to these forms are essential.

We will discuss the Zilker Park Working Group and the AISD school closure plan at the January meeting.

Thank you,
Mark Gentle

Barton Hills Community Park Update *by Roy O. Smithers, Chair, Park Executive Committee*

Moving the Top Running Trail and Irrigation: This project has been completed (see photo below). The top field has been sodded with grass and the field has been irrigated. Also, the trail has been moved making the baseball, soccer, kickball, etc. field larger. This is the last major project which was specified by the original Master Plan approved some years ago; however, this does not mean that improvements to the park will cease.

Beautification of the Area around the Stairs: Neighbor Craig Smith with the assistance of neighbor Melissa Hawthorne prepared and submitted a grant request to the Austin Parks Foundation (APF) to pay for beautifying the area around the stairs located on the east side of the park. The decision by APF of whether or not to approve the grant request should come before the end of December. Also noteworthy is that several neighbors donated a substantial sum the total of which has been doubled as a result of a \$5,000 matching donation by the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association. These funds give us the ability to provide matching funds which are required by APF for any future park grant.



Enlarged grass playing field

Thanks. As always, the Committee truly appreciates all of the support from Barton Hills Elementary School, City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department, the Barton Hills PTA, Barton Hills Neighborhood Association, Austin Parks Foundation and every Barton Hills resident. If you are interested in keeping up with the latest Committee discussions and/or the minutes of Committee meetings, they can be obtained by emailing me at rormsmith@aol.com.

APD District Representatives

We have new neighborhood Austin Police Department representatives. Shawn Rougeou represents the north side of Barton Skyway and can be reached at 512-974-5490 or Shawn.Rougeou@austintexas.gov.

Aaron Townsend represents the south side of Barton Skyway and can be reached at 512-974-4267 or Aaron.Townsend@austintexas.gov.

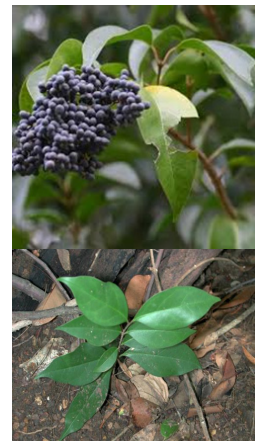


Invasive Plants:What Can I Do? by Melissa Hawthorne

This time of year it is easy to notice the invasive plants we have growing in our neighborhood. The two main offenders are *Ligustrum sinense/vulgare/japonica*, also known as ligustrum or Chinese privet, and *Nandina domestica*, aka nandina or heavenly bamboo. Ligustrum's glossy, green leaves and nandina's red berries stand out during the winter season and make them easier to identify for removal and maintenance. Prolific non-natives, these two species have no known natural enemies, competitors or diseases in the environment to keep them in check. Once an invasive plant begins to replace the native flora, it changes the whole ecosystem it invades, smothering or choking out native habitats and contributing to the loss of native pollinators such as honeybees, moths and hummingbirds, and the animals that rely on insect fauna that have been affected by these invasions. Here are a few ways to identify, manage, and replace these non-native species.

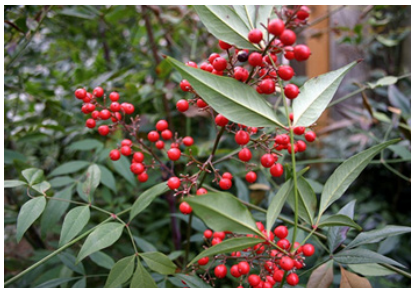


Ligustrum (see photo at left) is a non-native plant once used extensively in residential areas as a quick-growing ornamental hedge or screen. Due to its abundant blue-black berries (see photo at top right) that birds love to eat and spread, ligustrum will quickly overtake a landscape if not properly maintained or removed. As ligustrum is a tap root plant, they are easy to pull out when they are small. The glossy pointy green leaves that sprout symmetrically from the stem are easy to spot. Usually a little patch of them will be under the mothership (see photo at right). When out hiking, I take a few minutes and pull out the babies so there will be more room for the native trees to flourish.



If you are looking for a replacement, Texas mountain laurel is a beautiful and water-thrifty choice. Mountain laurels are slow growers, so to speed them up try root drenches with Medina Hasta Gro monthly: 1 ounce to 1 gallon of water. Yaupon holly and Cherry laurel are also lovely native replacements.

Our other invader is nandina (see photo below and at right). As with ligustrum, nandina was once heavily planted as a residential ornamental bush. You likely have some in your backyard. Their animal-dispersed seeds easily naturalize, displace native species and crowd out native plant communities. Seedlings can persist for several years before maturing. Nandina is difficult to remove manually because even the smallest piece of root will re-sprout, and the plants boast a substantial tap root which when established almost



impossible to contain. I manage their growth by carrying a pair of snips and a bag. When I see the telltale red berries, I just snip the branchlets and throw them into the trash. Just remember not to compost the berries. All parts of the nandina plant are toxic to animals. The plump, red berries are attractive but poisonous to birds, dogs, cats, some ruminant farm animals and wildlife. Excessive consumption of the berries is extremely toxic to migratory birds unfamiliar with this food source when found in their foraging flight paths. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center describes nandina as a "highly invasive weed that displaces non-toxic, native plants on which birds thrive and does more harm by actually poisoning native wildlife."



There several choices to replace nandina. One is *Viburnum tinus* 'Compactum', a viburnum species that grows to just 4-6' tall in part shade. In spring, compact or not, viburnum's fragrant flowers attract tons of tiny pollinators. Other options include Flameleaf sumac, Bush germander, Texas sage, Possumhaw holly, American beautyberry, Salvia greggi, Carolina buckthorn, Barbados cherry, Agarita, and its cousin, Texas barberry. Happy planting!

Greenbelt Guardians Report *by Glee Ingram, Greenbelt Guardians Committee Chair*

We have been practicing flexibility this season, given erratic and dramatic weather and a supplier mishap. On Saturday, September 29, 2018 we joined in the national celebration of Public Lands Day. We worked with volunteers on the Homedale portion of the Greenbelt trail.



We repaired the stone edging along both sides of the granite entry trail. And we took advantage of the moistened soil from the recent rains to put our weed wrenches and shovels to work. Volunteers removed large swaths of invasive nandina and ligustrum growing near the trail and further into the woodlands. There are now areas freed up for native plants and grasses to fill in. A neighbor provided us with native seeds to scatter in the cleared areas.

We also sent a few volunteers with large trash bags down to the rock flats and alongside the creek, and they came back with sacks filled with paper trash and clothing items and a sleeping bag and other curious remnants. There's always plenty to do!

On Saturday, November 3, 2018, we participated in the citywide event It's My Park Day, promoted by the Austin Parks Foundation. We started our work day at 8am, registering 55 volunteers at the Gus Fruh trail entry. Our ambition was to repair and resurface the areas of the decomposed granite trail that had eroded during the season's heavy rains.

We signed in all of the volunteers, and provided breakfast tacos and water, and described the work tasks and introduced the team leaders and passed out the tools (lots of shovels and rakes and a plate packer), BUT the supplier of the granite surface materials failed to show up... Time to punt, as they say.

So, we directed a large team of volunteers to work on digging out an expansive area of nandina shrubs that had spread near a section of the trail near the creek. It proved to be very satisfying and productive work, opening up new space for native grasses and forbs and trees to occupy. It looks more like native Hill Country land now.

We will be hiring the Texas Conservation Corps crew in early 2019 on Invasive Plant Removal, using the TCEQ (Texas Center for Environmental Quality) grant funds available to us. The balance available to us increased this past year, when a company fined for environmental degradation selected the Greenbelt Guardians as the recipient of their penalty payment.

So, same song, with the 14th year verse for our Greenbelt Guardians group. We appreciate the faithful participation of our neighborhood team leaders and the BHNA, and for the staff and crew of the Texas Conservation Corps, and for the grant funds from TCEQ, and donations made by individuals through the Austin Parks Foundation. It truly does take a village.

Choose Wise, Plant Healthy and Tread Lightly

By Debby B. McCray, Barton Hills Garden Club Membership and Recruiter

We all say that gardening is healing, but how much attention do we really pay to our own environment? During the holiday festivities and gatherings the average person gains approximately 10 pounds. Why not choose gardening to be your main activity while stimulating your mind, body and soul? Many of us work out in the gym yet ignore our own backyards. Every time you bend down to pick up a container or plant your favorite flower you are getting a good stretch of your body and mind. Pushing a lawnmower or pulling up weeds stimulate both your fine and gross motor skills while obtaining peace of mind. We become grounded when we touch the dirt.

Amy Minor, a friend of mine, has created a little piece of heaven in her own backyard. Amy surrounds herself and others with plants that butterflies love. She finds peace when she watches the butterflies feast on blossoms of Blue mistflower (see photo at right), milkweed, and as Sandy so eloquently wrote about in our last issue, zinnias. An appreciation of natural beauty and wonder helped her to establish Monarch Waystation #17961. She says "I embrace a satisfying feeling of productive accomplishment in my sore muscles at the end of the day knowing that whatever the results, they will be beautiful."



We are entering a great time to plant vegetables such as asparagus, carrots, lettuces, parsnips and radishes. Some vegetables appreciate being planted next to others. Cabbage likes to be planted with beets and members of the green leafy family. Herbs like mint will enhance the flavor of your cabbage. We agree that the caliche of our soil is usually unbearable so many avid gardeners choose to plant in raised beds.

Another viable option is to sow your seeds indoors in containers or pots. If you choose to plant outdoors, strategic selection and position of your vegetables will produce a high crop yield and improve disease resistance.



There are many methods and styles of gardening. My beautiful mom and I would always chuckle while discussing the finer techniques of landscaping because she would create space for plants and I would go to a nursery and select just about everything I wanted. We always managed to create the big picture, but went about it through different paths. Please note whatever your choices it's imperative to pay attention to size. Typically taller plants make for a better background while the smaller ones adorn a flower bed or service as ground color. One of my favorite colorful groundcovers is a small heat, drought and humidity-tolerant plant called Blue My Mind or Dwarf Morning Glory (see photo at left). It loves hot weather, making it an excellent choice for our Zone 8. Just remember to protect it from the frost. It's easy to maintain as no deadheading is required.

Personally, I find gardening to be an excellent way to relax and practice total submission to our world. I invite you to pour some coffee, a glass of wine or your favorite drink and sit quietly in your own sanctuary. Don't forget to tell your plants how much you appreciate them - because just like our precious animals, they love hearing our voices. And just like us, plants have a system for sending electrical signals and producing neurotransmitters.

As Michael Pollan says, "the garden suggests there might be a place where we can meet nature halfway."

Upcoming Events

1/26/19 - 2/3/19

“Silent Night” at The Long Center

Based on the 2005 film *Joyeux Noel*, Austin Opera’s production of the Pulitzer Prize–winning modern classic *Silent Night* recounts a miraculous moment of peace during World War I on Christmas Eve.

www.austinopera.org



2/17/19

Austin Marathon & Half Marathon

One of the country’s premier races attracts nearly 20,000 participants from around the world to downtown Austin. Events surrounding the marathon include a 5K, live music, finish line festival and beer garden.

www.youraustinmarathon.com

3/8/19 - 3/17/19

SXSW Music, Film and Interactive Conference and Festival

Austin Convention Center and more than 50 venues host noted filmmakers, musicians, and multimedia artists from around the world to showcase music, film and interactive media during this internationally-recognized event.

www.sxsw.com

South Zilker Park Cleanup *by Gail Rothe*

Saturday, January 5th, was the first Friends of South Zilker Park - Little Zilker Workday of 2019. Little Zilker, formerly the Robert E. Lee tributary, is the riparian channel that runs along the park side of what is now Azie Morton Road. The Friends of South Zilker Park host workdays throughout the year to clear the channel of debris and trash, remove ragweed, and restore native vegetation through seeding and planting.

Mark your calendars for the next workday:

Saturday, February 9, 2019

All tools, plants, seeds, trash bags, and gloves will be provided, but bring your own water bottle. Children under 13 are welcome but must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

See restoration map at right, courtesy of the Zilker Park Neighborhood Association.



Barton Hills Neighborhood Association
P.O. Box 41206
Austin, TX 78704

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Once you're a BHNA member, you can join the Barton Hills listserv.
Visit groups.yahoo.com/group/barton_hills/ for more information about how to sign up.

2019 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Fill out this form to join or renew your membership in the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association. Annual dues are \$10 per household, payable when you join (for a new membership) or every January (for renewal).

Your Name: _____

Other 18+ members of your household: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please send this form along with your annual dues to:

Barton Hills Neighborhood Association P.O. Box 41206 Austin, TX 78704

Make checks payable to BHNA. You can pay dues online through PayPal at <http://bartonhills.org/about/membership/>. (PayPal service fee of \$1 will be added to your total.)