

Native Texas Park Scavenger Hunt—Fall

Welcome to the prairie! Blackland Prairie used to dominate the Dallas region. Today, only 1% of the prairie remains in the state of Texas. Rediscovery of the lost prairie was the inspiration for this community park. During your walk you will learn some history of the prairie, identify native Texas plants and the wildlife they attract, and get a look at the future of managing rainwater run-off in an environmentally sustainable way. Don't worry if you can't find everything on our list during your first visit. The park is free and open to the public every day of the year, from sunrise to sunset. Each season brings beautiful changes to the prairie landscape here. Please come back again!

	<p>1. Side Oats Grama—Texas even has a state grass and this is what it looks like! Grasses were very important to both the Native Americans and European settlers because they provided grazing food for bison and cattle. Both animals were a main source of food, clothing and even shelter to people who lived on the prairie.</p>	<p>Let's talk about it:</p> <p>Why do you think the settlers chose to raise cattle rather than bison? Can you find another type of grass?</p>
	<p>2. Crushed Granite Pathways— As you walk down the gravel path toward the Great Lawn, you will see that the paths in the park are crushed stone or grass rather than concrete.</p>	<p>Let's talk about it:</p> <p>Why do you think this is? (Hint: Water has something to do with it!)</p>
	<p>3. Habitat - A special place where plants or animals can live. For animals, a habitat must provide places for food, shelter, and water. The park provides a habitat for birds, insects and small mammals. Look for other types of shelters on your walk!</p>	<p>Let's talk about it:</p> <p>What animal lives in the shelter pictured? Can you point out some food and water sources for it in the park?</p>
	<p>4. Grasshoppers—Producers need sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide to make their own food. Consumers are dependent on other organisms for food. Our plants are producers and grasshoppers and other plant-eating insects you see in the park are the consumers.</p>	<p>Let's talk about it:</p> <p>Do you know what a food chain is? If we start one with plants, then grasshoppers...what would be next in the food chain in this park?</p>
	<p>5. Monarch Butterfly—The state butterfly of Texas! The monarch female will only lay eggs on milkweed plants. For this reason, Milkweed is called a host plant. Nectar plants (like this Texas Lantana) provide food for the monarch during its migration. We have both host plants and nectar plants in this park. Many other butterflies visit the park, too. See any?</p>	<p>Let's talk about it:</p> <p>What is one thing you can do at home to promote a butterfly habitat?</p>

	<p>6. Turks Cap—These flowers have adapted to attract pollinators. When a hummingbird sips nectar from inside the flower, its head picks up pollen, too. Then, as the bird moves from flower to flower tasting more nectar, the pollen rubs off on the pistil of a new plant, thus fertilizing it, resulting in the production of the fruit. In August you might spot a hummer!</p>	<p>Let's talk about it:</p> <p>Do you know what else attracts hummingbirds to the beautiful Turks Cap flower?</p>
	<p>7. Wet Prairie— Water from all over the property eventually ends up here, where it slowly infiltrates into the cistern (an underground storage tank that can hold 250,000 gallons of water). We reuse 90% of our stormwater run-off. The grasses and sedges growing here adapt to both saturated and extremely dry conditions. Plants include Little Bluestem, Bushy Bluestem, Inland Sea Oats, and Cherokee Sedge.</p>	<p>Let's talk about it:</p> <p>Where do you think the rainwater run-off would go if we didn't have a wet prairie and cistern to keep it on our grounds?</p>
	<p>8. Maximilian Sunflower— This range plant is eaten by many livestock. In the fall, it produces a heavy crop of seeds, making it a valuable plant for wildlife, too. It was named for the naturalist Prince Maximilian of Germany, who led an expedition into the American West in the 1830's.</p>	<p>Let's talk about it:</p> <p>What park wildlife do you think would enjoy sunflower seeds as a food source?</p>
	<p>9. Forebay—Via underground pipes, stormwater from the service area to the east of the building, and the building itself, flows into the forebay. The limestone rocks slow the water down in order to prevent erosion and the sediment and litter carried with it settles out here before the water is released into the bioswales and on to the wet prairie and cistern.</p>	<p>Let's talk about it:</p> <p>Do you notice any litter or oily residue in the forebay? Where do you think that comes from?</p>
	<p>10. Pecan Tree— There's several trees near the amphitheater. One is the state tree of Texas, the pecan tree. Both Native Americans and Settlers used the pecan nut to supplement their diet, they used the leaves and bark for medicinal purposes, and the wood for implement handles and as fuel to burn.</p>	<p>Let's talk about it:</p> <p>What is your favorite pecan dish?</p>
	<p>BONUS! The Amphitheater— The stone used in the park is called "Leuders Limestone" and comes from Abilene, Texas. 65 million years ago Texas was under water. This limestone was formed by the layering of shells of small fossilized snails, shellfish, and coral over millions of years. The architect said this was the most beautiful limestone he's ever seen.</p>	<p>Let's talk about it:</p> <p>Examine the limestone in the amphitheater. What color is it? How would you describe its texture? Can you spot any fossils?</p>

Did you love your experience at the Native Texas Park? We encourage you to write a "Thank-you" letter to President and Mrs. Bush about your experience. Please send all correspondence to:

President and Mrs. Bush
P.O. Box 259000
Dallas, TX 75225-9000