



Allandale Neighbor

December 2022
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Allandale Neighborhood Association
and Allandale Neighbors

Geologic time: Introduction to radiometric age-dating of rocks

R.C. Smyth

Back to the beginning – geologic time. Geologists have a different concept of time than most humans. We often refer to events that happened millions of years ago (Ma). One century is a long time for people to live. Vineyards and wineries are considered old if they were established many 100s of years ago. Through preservation of ancient literature, archaeological excavations, and accidental discovery of artifacts, we know some civilizations have lasted millennia (thousands of years). The most recent Ice Age – with glaciers covering much of earth’s surface – ended about 11,000 years ago.

Rocks hold “keys” to interpreting geologic time. The keys can be radioactive elements trapped in minerals, or patterns of rock layers, or assemblages

of fossils, etc. With a few exceptions, changes in natural phenomena that took place over hundreds to thousands of years are undiscernible in the rock

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Allandale Block Captain Program 101

Carlene Wegmann Todd
ANA Safety Committee
ana_safety@googlegroups.com

Being a Block Captain can be a very rewarding experience. Knowing and interacting with your neighbors builds a strong community and has been proven to reduce crime when neighbors are able to recognize when something is unusual or out of place.

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Robbery Averted

Submitted by McGruff’s friend

While walking around the neighborhood recently, I came across McGruff the Crime Dog who was out and about on his usual patrols. In earlier Allandale newsletters, he’s shared with us information on local crime activity and safety tips. Most importantly, the protection he provides to us all has been essential in maintaining Allandale as a safe and lovely city neighborhood.

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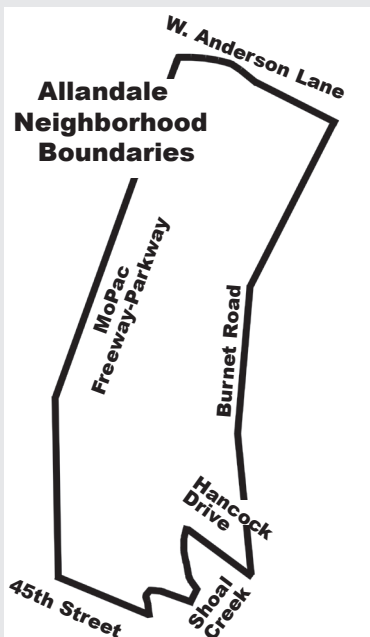
ANA Executive Committee meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month at NW Rec Center. General Membership meetings are held in April and October. (Meetings are currently held via Zoom)

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President's Letter

Hans Magnusson, ANA President

(512) 522-8773, ana@hmviking.com

Dear Allandale Neighbors:

I can report that the aphids in our yard disappeared, possibly with help from a hoard of ladybugs. Causality is hard to prove, but a week after the lady bugs were unleashed there wasn't any more aphid goo. Last weekend, after days of rain, when the temperature warmed up, our friendly lady bugs were out in full force climbing on windows and walls in search of food. I felt a slight bit of guilt when I realized their favorite food was gone. I hope that they stick around for next year's aphid invasion, but if they don't, I can always order another batch for next day delivery.

The November election passed without major incidents. Participation in the four Allandale precincts was 69.6% of registered voters. The participation for all of Travis was 52.33%. Compared to the primary election last spring, when we were below the average for Travis County, this was an improvement. Overall, the largest party in Travis County continues to be registered non-voters. I can't help but wonder why those folks even bother to register.

You can agree or disagree with the President that the Covid pandemic is over, but things seem to be much more open than even a year ago. If you are someone who enjoys socializing and have a pent-up desire to meet new friends and neighbors, please step forward and become involved with ANA. We are looking for folks to help organize events and activities over the next year. Who knows, you might learn all sorts of new things when you meet your neighbors. Just look at the variety of information in this newsletter: from bugs to food and neighborhood safety to geology. Getting people together, as we did with the recent park cleanup, has a positive effect on our community and might even encourage non-voters to invest their time and energy locally and take the most important step in civic participation.

skål,

Hans ☚

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Allandale Block Captain Program 101

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One of my favorite examples of the benefits of having a Block Captain program took place during the February 2021 “Snowpocalypse”. An Allandale Block Captain sent a group text to their block when a family needed diapers and essential supplies for their newborn baby. Within hours, needed supplies were delivered and the diaper disaster averted. This is just one of many examples of the power of community when there is an established process to get the word out.

What Does a Block Captain Do?

- The Block Captain takes on the main responsibility for maintaining and updating the contact list for their block.
- They are the primary point of contact for distributing information on neighborhood events, crime and safety reminders.
- Let the Block Captain Co-Chairs know of issues that need to be shared with all Allandale Block Captains or

the Allandale Neighborhood Association.

- Optionally, organize social events for the block such as a National Night Out party or a 4th of July potluck.
- Attend quarterly Block Captain Meetings.

How to Become a Block Captain?

We are fortunate to have many longtime Block Captains and have had many new neighbors volunteer over the past few months. There are still several streets still in need of block captains.

If you are interested and don't know if your street has a block captain, send an email to ana_safety@googlegroups.com. We will let you know if your street needs a Block Captain and send you information on how to get started. You can even build a Block Captain team. It's a fun way to get to know your neighbors, grow your network and stay informed of what's happening in our amazing neighborhood. ☘

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Robbery Averted

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Because McGruff is wholly committed to crime prevention, I inquired as to whether he would like to hear a story about how one kind and courageous woman was able to thwart a thief who violently threatened her in her own home. Needless to say, he was all ears.

Isabel Allende wrote this short story, Clarisa, about the eponymous protagonist who was a woman of deep faith and understanding of the frailties of human nature. She lived a simple and charitable life, impoverishing herself to help others. One night she was contentedly sewing in her bedroom when she heard unusual sounds in the house. Clarisa walked to the door of her room where she encountered an angry man who put a knife to her throat, demanding she sit in the chair so he could tie her up.

Clarisa calmly replied "Absolutely not. I could be your mother and you need to show some respect. Put away your knife; you could hurt somebody!" Of course, the intruder said "Listen, Señora, I came

to rob you." Continuing in her fearless manner, Clarisa firmly told him he was not going to rob her as she could not allow him to commit a sin. "You're not taking anything from me because I'm going to willingly give you, my money." And she did.

The prospective thief, a bit stunned, accepted the little money she had, after which she instructed him to follow her to the kitchen so they could enjoy a cup of tea. Clarisa asked him, where on earth did he get the idea to rob an old and poor woman? He explained he was without work, had four children to feed, and just couldn't return to his home again with empty hands. Clarisa helped him see the risk of such behavior, noting he could be jailed and worse, be condemned by Dios, unless he repented and charted a new course in life.

They bid one another goodbye with a pair of kisses on the cheeks. In the following years, until Clarisa's death, this man sent her a gift every Christmas as an

expression of his gratitude for her kindness and generosity of spirit.

Ten years later as the news of her impending death spread around the town, the community gathered to give her thanks and ask for her intercession with Dios. Among the crowd was the thief who had converted himself into a true professional. He proudly told Clarisa he now only robbed the rich, never with violence, and considered himself a gentleman, no longer sinning by robbing the poor.

Clarisa's response? "I will have to pray a lot for you, mi hijo."

McGruff enjoyed this story but understandably was a bit skeptical as others may also be.

But this is a story intended for the holidays with a message of light, love, and healing. May we all appreciate our blessings, have a wonderful time with family and friends, and remember those who depend on others to warm their bodies, hearts, and souls. ☼



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Geologic time: An introduction to radiometric age-dating of rock

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record. Consideration of rates of change of earth-processes and what is or is not preserved in rocks could lead to discussion of the continuum-endpoint-theories of uniformitarianism and catastrophism, but I won't go there now. Some polarized religious scholars argue about the philosophical flaws of geologic time because of gaps in the rock record. But science is science, it is secular; it is distinct from philosophy, religion, AND politics!

Geochronology is the science of determining ages of rocks. As a reminder, the three main types of rocks are igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary; you need to know the differences in how they form to understand geochronology. Here, I'll just remind you that igneous rocks are assemblages of distinct minerals that crystallized from semi-liquid, molten magma, which can be derived from older rocks that have melted. Two methods of age-dating are absolute and relative. Absolute determination of a rock's age is accomplished by measuring concentrations of radioactive elements that were incorporated into minerals when they crystallized to form igneous rocks. An example of a pair of chemical elements used to date rocks is uranium (U) and lead (Pb).

The time it takes for half the mass of a radioactive element (e.g., U) to decay to more stable "daughter" products (e.g., isotopes of Pb) is called its half-life. The slower a radioactive "parent" element decays, which corresponds to a longer half-life, the older the ages of rocks that can be determined using pairs of specific isotopes of the radioactive elements. If you have not studied chemistry, you might need to look up the word isotope.

Because U decays slowly to Pb, their relative concentrations are used to age-date rocks older than at least one-million years. A principle of radiometric age-dating is that radioactive, parent chemical elements are trapped in a closed system; that is a mineral as it crystallizes, and the daughter products also remain trapped as the radioactive decay proceeds. A slightly different type of radiometric age-dating is done by measuring the amount of radiogenic carbon (carbon-14, ^{14}C) remaining in old organic compounds. This method can only be used to date organic material (contained in sediments or rocks) that is between 50,000 and 100,000 years old. Aside: minerals are inorganic compounds. My use of the term organic here means something that contains the element carbon (C) and has nothing to do with whether pesticides or fungicides have been introduced or not.

Geoscientists work hard to age-date rocks on earth (and even harder for rocks from the Moon!). Absolute age-dating requires finding rocks with minerals that (1) contain specific, measurable, radioactive elements trapped within their crystallographic structure, and (2) have not been physically or chemically altered to allow the decay/daughter products to escape from the crystal structure. If these requirements are satisfied, such a mineral can be processed (crushed) in a

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Geologic time: An introduction to radiometric age-dating of rock

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laboratory that has the high-tech analytical equipment required to obtain the data needed to calculate an age.

One valuable mineral in terms of radiometric age-dating is zircon (a zirconium [Zr] silicate, $[Zr_{1-y} REE_y] [SiO_4]_{1-x} [OH]_{4x-y}$). Rare earth elements (REE) can substitute for Zr, plus U and other radioactive elements, such as U, can also be trapped in the zircon crystal structure when the mineral is forming. Zircon minerals are so stable they are often preserved in sedimentary rocks even after the igneous rocks in which they have formed get broken apart by erosion. Zircon is resistant to alteration from heat so can remain intact during metamorphism; it has high specific gravity so can be separated and recovered from rocks crushed in a laboratory setting. Minerals with high specific gravity will most rapidly sink to the bottom of a container filled with water and other crushed components of a rock.

The process of measuring concentrations of primary radiogenic elements and their

decay products – trapped in a single mineral – requires sophisticated laboratory equipment operating in a “clean” environment to avoid contamination from other mineralogical sources. Since the process of absolute age-dating is so complex, ages should be reported along with uncertainty factors, or estimates of error.

For example, look at Wikipedia for oldest rocks: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oldest_dated_rocks. It reports an age of 4.031 ± 0.003 billion years. The 0.003-billion-year value is the uncertainty associated with the age of 4.031 billion years, which is still a really OLD rock even with a possible error of plus or minus 3 million years.

The science of absolute geochronology is complex and was not developed until the 20th century, which is exceptionally young in the context of geologic time. Since the early 1800s (and most likely earlier), geoscientists figured out relative ages of many rock-formations through field-observation and mapping of rocks in

their natural settings. This too is a complex science and is what many people think of when asked to define geology.

So, what does this article have to do with the geology of Allandale or even Central Texas? Recall from my August newsletter article that by driving down the hill on Mt. Bonnell Drive south of Covert Park you are going back in time by millions of years – at least with respect to the rocks. Geologists know of this huge timespan through a combination of absolute and relative geochronology. I'll write more about relative geochronology next time.

As with my earlier articles, this is not meant to be a complete explanation of an aspect of geology, but just an introduction to topics you may not have thought about before. Hopefully, my articles will pique your interest in geology and other earth or environmental sciences. Please keep the questions coming. ☼

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Dena Houston

ZERO WASTE BY 2040 – WHY????

In December 2011, the Austin City Council unanimously approved the adoption of the Austin Resource Recovery Master Plan committing the city to a zero-waste goal. This goal would reduce the amount of trash sent to the landfill by 90% by the year 2040. The diversion rate at the end of fiscal year 2021 was 41.96 %. You can read the proposal in its entirety at https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Trash_and_Recycling/MasterPlan_Final_12.30.pdf



WHAT'S WRONG WITH LANDFILLS?

Trash generation in the United States has almost tripled since 1960. Trash is handled in various ways. Currently in the U.S., about 32.5% of the trash is recycled or composted, 12.5% is burned, and 55%

is buried in landfills [source: EPA]. The amount of trash buried in landfills has doubled since 1960.

WHY WE DON'T WANT MORE LANDFILLS

Landfills are very costly. They are designed to bury trash rather than convert and reuse it. When a landfill closes, it must be maintained for at least 30 years to prevent pollution of the soil and ground water. It is very costly to protect our natural resources from landfill contamination.

No one wants a landfill in his/her backyard. Landfills are very large and unsightly; Austin's landfill is 2000 acres. Also, there can be lots of noise and odor associated with a landfill.

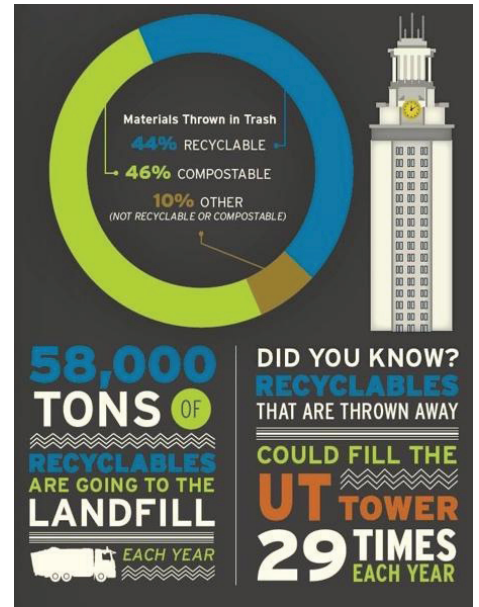
Here is a list of how long it takes for items to decompose in a landfill:

- Plastic bags - 10 to 20 years
- Glass bottle – 1 million years
- Plastic Bottles – 500+ years
- Wool socks – 1 to 5 years
- Leather shoes - 25 to 40 years
- Nylon fabric – 30 to 40 years
- Styrofoam cup - 100 years

(Source: UK Department of the Environment)

ALL OF THE ABOVE ITEMS CAN BE RECYCLED IN AUSTIN!

WE NEED TO RECYCLE, REUSE AND REDUCE – TOO MUCH IS GOING TO OUR LANDFILL!



The poster above is shocking. Too many things that are filling up our landfill can be recycled.

WE SHOULD ALL MAKE A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION TO HELP MAKE AUSTIN'S LANDFILL A THING OF THE PAST!

ZERO WASTE BLOCK LEADERS

One program that is helping Austin reach its goal of zero waste is the Zero Waste Block Leader program. I have been a Zero Waste Block leader for over 30 years (before the program officially began). Zero Waste Block Leaders (ZWBLs) are engaged residents who are passionate about sustainability and zero

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Please Recycle!



Lettuce Recycle

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

waste. They offer their time and knowledge to their friends, families, and neighbors. They share information about recycling, composting, repurposing, and repairing. There is a training program to learn about recycling in Austin and to connect with Austin recycling leaders. To learn more about this program, go to <https://www.austintexas.gov/zwb1>

PERSONAL STORY

My father-in-law worked for the Texas Health Department in landfill permitting. He told a story about a small town in Texas whose landfill was at capacity. All the town's garbage trucks were lined up to dump their content, but could not, because the landfill was too full. The mayor of this small town had a solution – BUY MORE GARBAGE TRUCKS! This story reflects a rather short-sighted way of dealing with landfill issues.

COMPOST HERO

A friend and neighbor manage commercial properties and is passionate about composting. She has arranged with a commercial compost collection company to collect paper towels in her office building. Containers have been placed in all 30 bathrooms and some of the offices. Imagine how many paper

towels are used every day in 30 bathrooms!

QUESTIONS FROM OUR READERS:

HOW DO I RECYCLE THE BROWN PAPER MAILING ENVELOPES WITH A BUBBLE WRAP LINING?

These are not recyclable because there are two layers of materials that cannot be separated. Bubble wrap by itself can be recycled in the plastic collection bins located at most grocery stores.

CAN NUT SHELLS GO INTO THE COMPOST COLLECTION CANS?

Yes, they can.

CAN FROZEN FOOD BAGS ON ORGANIC FOOD BE RECYCLED?

No, all frozen food bags (even for organic foods) are treated with special polymers to keep the frozen food fresh. These must go into the trash can.

Here is a very informative City of Austin recycling website:

www.austintexas.gov/what-do-i-do.

Stay tuned for future tips that will include creative ways to recycle or reuse. If you have any questions or recycling ideas, please send them to:

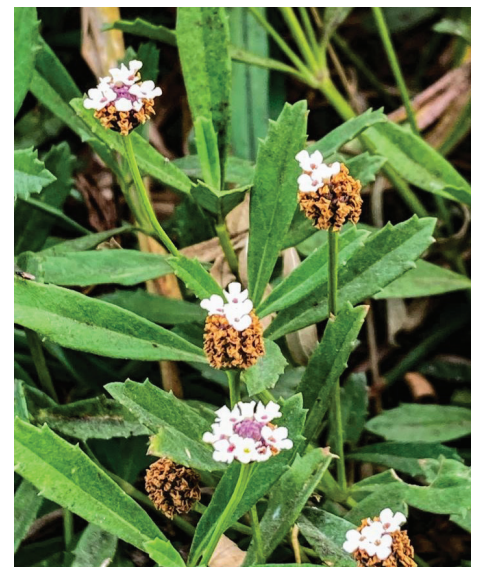
recycling@hpwbana.org. ☞

Using the Seek Application to ID Wildlife

Steve Oleson

When growing up, I learned the general names of most of the common flora and fauna in central Texas: oak, mockingbird, prickly pear, etc. In junior high school, several of us did not bring our tennis shoes to P.E., so the coach made us run ½ mile in the schoolyard, bare-footed. I quickly learned some new plant species: sand burr and goat's head stickers. The pain from those plants encouraged me to look very carefully at the ground before planting another foot on the ground. I noticed one cottony little plant in the field that did not cause me any pain. I did not recognize it and did not know its name until I installed the Seek application in my phone. That plant is *Diaperia prolifera* or Flathead Rabbit Tobacco! What a wonderful name!

I have a friend who is a botanist and general wildlife enthusiast. Before I installed Seek, I sent her photographs asking her to identify random plants. Being a botanist, she encouraged me to learn the Latin binomial for each species. But I really enjoy the colorful colloquial names of so many species like: Turkey Tangle Frog fruit, Pale green Assassin bug, and the appropriately named Dog Vomit Slime Mold.



Turkey Tangle Frog fruit, Steve Oleson

The application identifies plant, insects, birds, arachnids, amphibians,

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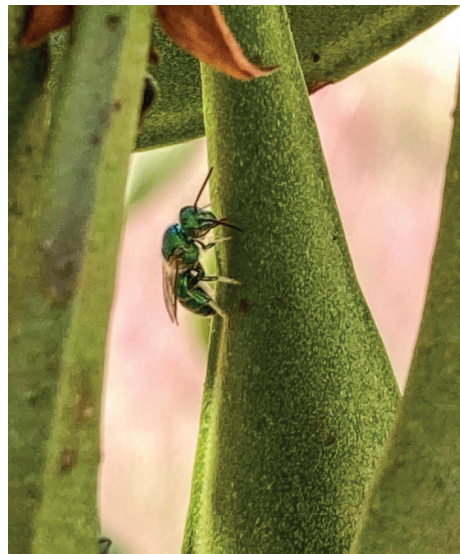
reptiles, fungi, mollusks, mammals, and fish species, provides a map showing where it can be found, and briefly gives information about it on a Wikipedia page! Both the Latin binomial and the common name usually give an idea about the plant, but I find the common names much more entertaining and thought-provoking!

One plant name led me down the rabbit hole: Lilac Chaste Tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*). Why would it be named that? The Wikipedia page says: "Vitex agnus-castus, also called vitex, chaste tree, chasteberry, Abraham's balm, lilac chastetree or monk's pepper." That's a whole lot of chastity!! Additionally, it says: "It has been long believed to be an anaphrodisiac – leading to its name as chaste tree – but its effectiveness for such action remains unproven..." Pliny, in his *Historia Naturalis*, reported the use of stems and leaves of this plant by women as bedding "to cool the heat of lust" during the time of the Thesmophoria, when Athenian women left their husbands to remain ritually chaste."

Texas Virgin's Bower (*Clematis drummondii*) also piqued my curiosity; what could lead someone to name it that? The Native Plant Society of Texas says that: "A "bower," ... can have several meanings. One is that of a secluded, shady place under trees, often in a garden, another is of a twining arch or arbor. Then there is the reference to a lady's private dressing room, or, from medieval times, a lady's private apartment in a castle tower." Another favorite plant name is Turkey Tangle Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*). There MUST be a story behind that name, but I have not been

able to find out how this tongue twisting name was derived.

So far, I have had Seek identify 264 plants, 14 birds, 51 insects, 11 fungi, 7 arachnids, 2 reptiles, and a variety of "other species". It also identifies whether the species is native or introduced. I have been pleased to see how many native species survive in Austin. Some of my favorite non-plant species are: Twin-flagged jumping spider (*Anasatis canosa*), Rabid Wolf Spider (*Rabidosa rabida*), fungi like Rosy Navel (*Contumyces rosellus*), Fairy Ring (*Marasmius oreades*), and insects Glassy-winged Sharpshooter (*Homalodisca vitripennis*), and the Pale green Assassin bug (*Zelus luridus*). While at the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, I noticed a green wasp-like insect. Curious, Seek identified it as the "Metallic Epauletted Sweat Bee" (*Augochloropsis metallica*) Metallica!



Metallic Epauletted Sweat Bee, Steve Oleson

I think that J.R.R. Tolkein must have enjoyed the common names of plants. I have found a few that sound like they could have been Bilbo's cousins' names: Hairy Crabgrass, Corn Gromwell, and Prickly Sowthistle, (probably a relative of *Lobelia Sackville-Baggins!*).

Some of my favorite native Texas plants are those that I have glimpsed while driving at highway speed. Have you ever noticed the pink bouquets growing on highway cuts in the hill country? Seek identified them as Mountain Pink (*Zeltnera beyrichii*). Another of my favorites is Standing Cypress (*Ipomopsis rubra*). Like the Mountain Pink, they like well-drained areas and do not need a lot of soil to flourish. They remind me of sprays of red gladiolus. The Dotted Gayfeather (*Liatrix punctata*) is another beautiful native plant. I thought I knew what a mimosa was, until I pointed my phone and Seek at this tiny plant. It is Sunshine Mimosa (*Mimosa strigillosa*). It stands about three inches tall and is a "sensitive" plant; you can see its leaves close if you pinch them.

The beach is a good place to use Seek. I am a bit of a birder, but there are way too many wading birds to identify on occasional trips to the coast. They run by so swiftly, trying to stay ahead of incoming waves! I identified the Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) and learned that "Ruddy Turnstones flip rocks, pebbles, and seaweed along shorelines in search of food." (allaboutbirds.org) While at the Texas coast, I noticed this thing I thought might be some immature form of a Portuguese Man-of-War. I was wrong. It

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Using the Seek Application to ID Wildlife

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is a Blue Button (*Porpita porpita*). Wikipedia says that it is: "...a marine organism consisting of a colony of hydroids found in tropical and sub-tropical waters... each is actually a colony of hydrozoan polyps." Mind blown; what an amazingly diverse planet we live on!



Ruddy Turnstones, Steve Oleson

The Seek application has a series of "Challenges" where you can earn "Badges"! (I don't need no stinking badges!) There are about thirty Challenges, ranging from "The Restoration & Recovery Challenge" to "Vertebrate Water Predator Challenge". I

have accidentally almost earned the Restoration badge, just using the app to identify species in the neighborhood. I just need to identify one more mollusk to earn that badge!

Install the Seek application on your phone. You will be amazed at the variety of species in Allandale, and expand your understanding of the world we live in. ☘

A yard sign with a colorful border of diverse people holding hands. The text reads "NEIGHBORS UNITED AGAINST HATE". Below the text, it says "Yard signs available HERE" and includes a QR code with a small 'b' logo in the center.

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Ensign wasps

Wizzie Brown

Have you ever seen what you thought was a weird looking house fly in your home? If so, then you may have seen an ensign wasp. Ensign wasps are small with a body reaching a length of about ¼ of an inch, not including the hind legs which are very long and extend past the tip of the body. These wasps are black in color and have a unique abdomen (the third and last section of the body) that is shaped like a sailor's signal flag and comes off the top of the thorax (the second section of the insect body).



These wasps do not sting or bite, so there is no need to be concerned if you find one or more in your home. Ensign wasps are beneficial insects that help to manage cockroach populations, so seeing them is a sign that there are cockroaches nearby.

Ensign wasps lay their eggs inside the egg case of larger species of cockroaches, such as American, Smokybrown, or Oriental cockroaches. A single egg is laid in each cockroach egg case. When the wasp egg hatches, the developing larva feeds on the dozen or so cockroaches inside the egg case. The wasp pupates within the cockroach egg case and then chews a hole to emerge as an adult and begin the cycle over.

If an ensign wasp is spotted, then leave it alone to help control cockroaches and search for where cockroaches may be hiding, which is often in dark places near a water source. If you find cockroaches, you can use a cockroach bait product to help manage them. Since the cockroaches that ensign wasps attack are species typically found outside, you can also work to

exclude your home to keep the cockroaches outdoors.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.

The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made

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Northwest Park Notes - 2022

Mary Fero

Clean-ups, Bird Songs and Changes to Come

Glancing across the 31-acre expanse of Beverly Sheffield Northwest District Park, you might not notice much different than you saw at the start of 2022. While may be true today, a lot of activity happened this year that will make changes visible in the not-too-distant future.

And some changes involve what you don't see! In November, on Fall 2022 It's My Park Day, about three dozen volunteers showed up for another Shoal Creek clean-up. Some of the group split off to remove discarded clothing found in the cement storm drain basin on the hill across from the playground. In the lead-up to this day, a very special neighbor pulled a giant tire (estimated to weigh more than 500 pounds!) out of the pond.

This was the second of the biannual It's My Park Day events that occur the first Saturday of every March and November. In the past, we've sown wildflower seeds, pulled weeds, painted over graffiti and installed native plants. If there are projects you think we should tackle, let us know, and come join us! It's a fun and fulfilling way to meet neighbors and help make the neighborhood a better place.

Northwest Park also was host this year to several bird walks sponsored by Travis Audubon Society. Our area's greenery and aquatic resources make for an inviting habitat, and participants enjoyed seeing a variety of native and migrating species.

As to other notable changes, in February, the Austin Parks and Recreation Board adopted the final Vision Plan for Sheffield Northwest Park, and the department director approved its implementation. While some projects are funded, other items must wait for future budgets to see those visions become reality.

A much-needed new playground is one item that has funding readily available. Ironically, the need to replace a sanitary wastewater line through the area has the playground project on hold pending Austin Water department scheduling for the pipe work.

Also, in the bond funding stream are needed updates to Sheffield Northwest Pool, which were approved through a separate Vision Plan process involving input from neighbors and community members. The pool will maintain its designation as a regional aquatic center with 50-meter lap lanes, and the pool and the toddler pool will be refitted with a zero-entry (walk-in) feature. The project is in the design development and permitting phase, and construction is anticipated to begin following the 2023 swim season.

Efforts to conserve the pond continue. The most recent news on plans for water quality and quantity testing was that no funds were available, but a report is expected at the Parks board January meeting, thanks to the request of our District 7 board representative Nancy Barnard.

Although the pool has drained into the pond since its original design, that will no longer be allowed after the pool modernization is completed. So, finding a reliable water supply for the pond is critical, especially during dry times. As it turns out, groundwater has been seeping into the pool and leaking into the pool's pump room. When the land for the park was purchased in 1955, Shoal Creek made a big horseshoe bend through the park. The dam was later built to straighten, or channelize, the creek; and the speculation is that groundwater may be rising from the



Happy after another successful creek clean-up



Scouts making a difference



Kevin X. Smith, CFA
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- Should we just use index funds?



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old creek bed. Ways to continue to direct that groundwater from the pool to the pond are being explored as part of the pool engineering design.

Finally, day-to-day park issues continue to call for attention and broader support. Last summer saw a rise in undesirable activities at parks throughout the city. In response, the Parks board created a working group on crime in the parks, and an update on their efforts will be shared in January. Thankfully, after extended outages

in Northwest Park, all lights now seem to be restored. Meanwhile, if you see issues of concern, please report them to 311 or 911 if you witness an urgent situation.

We're so fortunate to live in a place with lots of green space, natural habitat and varied recreational opportunities. Here's looking ahead to 2023, when we hope to see you at the park!

Mary Fero
ANA Parks, Recreation and Greenspace Committee ☼



Neighbor Randall Wimbish pulls a 500-pound tire out of the pond

Allandale Quick Bites

Robert Mace

Santa made a list, checked it twice, and it appears we have been nice since we have some culinary presents opening around the neighborhood. **Deep Purpl**, which serves up smoothies, açai bowls, and empanadas, has opened over yonder near **Dos Batos**. And on the other side of Dos Batos, **Pita Fusion** is days away from opening. **Pokéworks** by **Einstein's** is still in the works (but getting closer) as is **Voodoo Donut**. **Taco Shack Express** is fixin' to open at the old (and sadly closed) **Baby Greens** location at 1513 West Anderson Lane. Baby Greens shut down because they were not able to hire enough employees to stay open. With this Taco Shack and the one just west of MoPac and one just south of 45th Street, I'm starting to feel like James Bowie and William B. Travis hunkered down in a little rock church.

Austin's Very Own Saltt (still not a typo) has a banner up at Northcross promising seafood and daiquiris when it opens. **Grove Market** and **Grove Liquor** at **The Grove** are now groovily open. There has been more—but slow—progress

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Yard Life

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Allandale Quick Bites

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

at the locations for **Carve American Grille**, **Verdad True Modern Mexican**, and **East Side Pies**. **Foxtrot**, a fancy convenience store out of Chicago, announced that it will open in the former pet place at the corner of Burnet and 49th (and three other locations in town).

The culinary carbuncles of **Eater Austin** recognized **Monkey Nest** for having a fireplace; **Bufalina Due**, **Bird Bird Biscuit**, and **The Peached Tortilla** as essential restaurants; **LaLa's Little Nugget** and **Epoch Coffee** for indulgent hot chocolates; **LaLa's Little Nugget** for boozy eggnog; **dipdipdip** and **Bufalina Due** for date night; **Barrett's Coffee** and **Epoch Coffee** for excellent coffee; **Ichi-Umi** and **Ichiban** for sushi; **Top Notch** for iconic burgers; **Barley Swine** for its fancy tasting menu; **Chi'Lantro** and **La Cocina de Consuelo** for fully packed burritos; and **Fonda San Miguel** for its private dining room.

Thrillest included the Lovely Day Egg Sandwich from **Bird Bird Biscuit** on its list of essential Austin dishes; **Pinthouse Pizza** on where to drink beer this winter; **Tiny Pies**, **Upper Crust**, and **Chez Zee** for pies; and **Picnic**, and **Tso** for best veg and vegan. Austin's second-best food critic, the American-Statesman's Matthew Odam, included **Bufalina Due** (#6), **Barley Swine** (#10), **Eldorado Café** (#23), and **Bartlett's** (#27) among his top 27 restaurants in town. May your stocking be full of foodie gift cards and good treats!

For hotlinks (digital, not sausages from Elgin) and color photos, please visit austinwanderlist.com. ☼



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Choo

Robert Mace

I walked in, stopped, and announced, loudly: "Aaahhhhh.... Choo!" After several attempts to visit Choo, I finally arrived with the door unlocked and sando in the chiller. Although no one blessed me, I was blessed with some blissfully good Japanese-style sandwiches. Sando is part of *yōshoku*, or Western-inspired Japanese food. In the case of sando, the Japanese put their unique spin on every element of the Western sandwich.

The bread, *shokupan*, or milk bread, is similar to American white bread but with the slightest of sweetness. If you are an anti-cruiser, sando is the peanut butter to your jam because the prep requires crust removal, leaving only a ghost of brown fringe. Sando fillings are prepared with the attention to detail usually reserved for sushi with ingredients carefully chosen to complement each other. Chef Dong Ho Choo's sandos are designed to give the primary ingredients the main stage. These sandos are about tasting what's in them, not nuking your taste buds with over-the-top sauces and spreads. The preparation is also like sushi in that great attention is paid to aesthetics. These are the cutest dang sammiches I ever done ate.

Choo offers a variety of sando to choose from. In some cases, there's a mix of sando in the standard package of three half-sandwiches. Besides standard menu items, Choo also has special sando and special sides. The Bride and I went bonkers on our first visit because, just like a coven of kittens, you want them all! We picked up a couple variety packs (a fruit combo and a pork, shrimp, beef combo) as well as packages of smoked salmon and egg salad and the lobster salad special. A package of three halfers generally runs about \$15 to \$17 and is enough for a meal.

As promised, the ingredients sing. You could taste and savor every element of each sando. The Smokey Sally performed with notes of avocado, mascarpone cream cheese, cucumber, and romaine in harmony with the yuzu smoked salmon. I particularly liked the Tamago Sando with a sky of fluffy, Japanese-style egg salad embracing the rising half-sun of a soft-boiled egg. And you can't help but smile at the delightful fruit sando with strawberries and grapes hovering in housemade whipped cream.

Chef Choo has a long history in Allandale. He worked at Haru (now Ichi Umi) for more than 15 years before stumbling into making sando for a church fundraiser. The success of the sando fundraiser led directly to Choo. Besides sando, Chef Choo brings his Ichi Umi chops with sushi and omakase also available for pre-order and take-out.

All in all, Choo is highly recommended. At the very least, they are nothing to sneeze at.

Choo, chefchoo.com, 5222 Burnet Road #535, (512) 800-0119, full color review at austinwanderlist.com

☼

Poke-Poke

Robert Mace

Poke is a Hawaiian dish of cubed raw fish seasoned in different ways. Poke (pronounced po-kay) in Hawaiian means “cut crosswise into pieces” and traces back to pre-colonial times when locals mixed cubed fish with salt, seaweed, and roasted kukui-nuts. Unlike other dishes of raw fish, poke does not use citrus. Over time, as different cultures came to the islands, the mix of ingredients expanded to reflect the tastes and cuisines of the interlopers. As poke has moved across the planet, the dish has further changed as different areas and chefs have made modifications (not all for the best [I’m looking at you Flamin’ Hot Cheetos]).

When Trisha Fortuna and her hubs Jason McVeary returned to Los Angeles after enjoying poke on O’ahu and found no poke places, they opened Poke-Poke on Venice Beach in 2010 (hence the tagline “The Surfer’s Sashimi” and the surfer vibes of the decor). In 2014, they returned to Austin, bringing Poke-Poke with them. They’ve now expanded to three locations in Austin (including one in Allandale at 2320 Hancock) and one in Fort Worth with more on the way.

Poke-Poke stays on the traditional side, leaving their dishes fish-forward (no Flaming Hots here, my friends). You order fast-casual style, first choosing a recipe that ranges from basic to spicy to vegan (pressed tofu instead of fish), then choosing a size and base, then adding included and/or premium ingredients. Then you sit down to enjoy! The Bride raved about her Aloha Poke (ahi tossed with light aloha shoyu, rice wine vinegar, sea salt and chili flake and topped with cucumber), secretly returning several days later for more (if there’s infidelity in our marriage, it’s with food). I tried the OG (Ahi tossed with shoyu, sesame oil, white and green onion, and sesame seeds with the Sriracha Aioli option plus avocado). While I wasn’t as bonkers about it as The Bride, I certainly enjoyed it, perhaps preferring The Bride’s simpler choice than my saucy selection. And there’s no denying the healthy aspects of the food. Besides the aforementioned vegan choice, Poke-Poke can also accommodate gluttons for the gluten-free.

My only disappointment with Poke-Poke is the name. When Trisha and Jason brought the business to Texas, they should have renamed it Hoke-Poke, cause that’s what we do ’round these parts!

Poke-Poke, poke-poke.com, 2320 Hancock Drive, (512) 840-1942, full color review at austinwanderlist.com ☘

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