Karst Preserve Friends for Village at Western Oaks Karst Preserve and Watershed Management Area (VWOKPMA)

Report by founder Stephanie Simmons, December 4, 2019





Karst Preserve Friends endeavor to increase the enjoyment of the Karst Preserve (KP) through stewardship, education and activities in support of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) mission. Including:

I. Facebook Pages Promoting VWOKPWMA!

A. Page: "Village at Western Oaks Karst Preserve and Watershed Management Area"

1. www.facebook.com/pg/VWOKPWMA **@VWOKPWMA**
2. About: "CoA land set aside for the preservation and protection of the caves and sink that are located within it."
3. Native Plants to Use in Our Landscapes (photo album: http://bit.ly/32l8vtH)

   This album contains pictures of recommended native central Texas plants that thrive in our neighborhood! All of these pictures are taken of plants within or adjacent to the Karst Preserve to show that they WILL WORK in lawns AND reduce the need for chemicals and water in their landscapes.

4. Photos: www.facebook.com/pg/VWOKPWMA/photos

B. **Group:** **"Karst Preserve Friends"**

5. www.facebook.com/groups/KarstPreserveFriends

6. About: "Karst Preserve Friends endeavor to increase the enjoyment of the Karst Preserve (KP) through stewardship, education and activities in support of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) mission."

7. Photo Albums: https://www.facebook.com/groups/KarstPreserveFriends/photos/?filter=albums

II. Promotion of Educational Activities using Facebook & Nextdoor

C. 2019.02.23: 2019 Austin Cave Festival @ LBJ Wildflower Center

D. 2019.04.07: Cave Tours for Village at Western Oaks Residents

E. 2019.09.17: Barton Springs University Day

F. 2019.10.18 & 2019.10.19: Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center – Fall Plant Sale

III. Hands-On Educational Activities within the Karst Preserve

G. 2019.03.23: 4th Annual – "Texas Most Wanted: Invasive Plant Buy-Back & Native Plant Swap"

Turn in an Invasive Plant → Go home with a prized Native Plant
Bring a Native Plant →Swap for a different Native Plant
Show up empty-handed → Go home with a new Native Plant and Plant Guide!

8. Photo Album: http://bit.ly/2PSeaF0

H. 2019.04.13 & 2019.04.14: Austin's Soil Kitchen

City of Austin Brownfields Office was at the East Austin Garden Fair where I dropped off several soil samples that I took from various locations around the VWOKPWMA. I haven't published the results of these tests yet.

I. 2019.05.05 & 2019.05.19: Bluebonnet Seed Rescue & Education

Neighbors met at the Karst Preserve trailhead to rescue bluebonnet seeds from the plants along the decomposed granite trail. After being rescued, these bluebonnet seeds were distributed throughout the Preserve into sunny areas created by the loss of tree canopy. Participants learned about bluebonnet seed cycle basics, such as;

- when to harvest
- how to harvest
- what to do with the harvest

9. Photo: https://www.facebook.com/events/2399316523636086/

J. 2019.10.19: Co-Hosted a TreeFolks Workshop: Curing Plant Blindness & Beginner TreeID

TreeFolks' Education Coordinator, Collin McMichael, lead a casual beginner tree identification walk intended to reintroduce participants to nature and teach them about the trees of the Preserve. After a short break, TreeFolks broke out their proprietary Tree ID Keys and taught participants how to identify trees using a dichotomous key.

10. Photo Album: http://bit.ly/2CirMkN

IV. Ongoing Activities

A. Assisting a local Boy Scout develop an Eagle Scout project within the Preserve.

B. Maintaining Google Maps for the Karst Preserve:

11. https://goo.gl/maps/XZhnMQ1uczSAYi4G6 (or http://bit.ly/2NFhvEG)

These are pics of scenery and activities that I have taken from the last few years in the KP. Some have SNOW! Anyone can add to these. Someone from the TreeID hike just added the pic of the Escarpment Black Cheery bark and gave the Preserve a 5-Star review!

C. *Plans for more educational neighborhood participation:*

12. Continue removing yellow sweet clover (it crowds out the bluebonnets)

13. Planted some new natives around the circle:

    a. Gregg's Mistflower (Conoclinium greggii)

    b. Mealy Blue Sage (Salvia farinacea)

14. Plant these natives for more quantity and diversity:

    c. Frostweed (Verbesina virginica)

    d. Red Yucca (Hesperaloe parviflora)

    e. American Elm (Ulmus Americana)

    f. Prairie Flameleaf Sumac (Rhus lanceolate)

    g. Pecan (Carya illinoinensis)

15. Educating neighbors on alternatives to pesticides such as:

- boiling water treatment for fire ants.
- Reducing turf in lawns through sheet mulching and native plant installations.