

Prairie Notes

April 12, 2007

Subject: Tandy Hills Nature Area: Thy Name is Diversity!

It never fails. Every February, I impatiently walk the somber slopes of Tandy Hills NA, thinking to myself that, these dry, dead grasses will never yield to the technicolor wildflower show I remember from last March. But every year without fail, so far, as the days and nights march toward Equinox, **Tandy Hills Nature Area** explodes back to life.

Ladies and gents, it's showtime! What started with a tiny, yellow Pucoon flower in early March has quickly been transformed into a landscape that would have tested the limits of Monet's palette.

This is no exaggeration. In my visits to other remnant prairies in the area, I have never encountered the diversity of wildflowers that THNA has in spades. Amazingly, it's all done without the Hand of Man or Woman. No Miracle Gro. No compost. No tilling or hand watering. Even more amazing, they grow out of nearly solid limestone rock, just five minutes from downtown Fort Worth (aka: Dirty Ol' Town.)

Bluestar, Prairie Celestial, Engleman's Sage, Engleman's Daisy, Winecup (burgundy, rose' & chablis), Indian Paintbrush (pink, red, purple, yellow & orange), Yarrow, Flax (yellow & blue), Texas Star, Giant Blue Sage, Foxglove, on and on and on. Plenty of Blue-eyed Grass, but Bluebonnets are scarce.

So, come to Tandy Hills. Soon. Bring your camera, your easel, your handbook, your pen and thesaurus, but mostly, bring your mind. After millennia of evolution for their own purposes, these flowers are now at the mercy of humankind, indeed, the City of Fort Worth.

If the free show we enjoy is to continue, restoration must commence, and soon. Without the cleansing effect of natural fire, invasive plants have crept up the slopes an average of 1 foot per year. It's just a matter of time before the wildflowers and grasses are shaded out by undesirable trees and shrubs.

This is a reversible process, but it requires willpower and persistent action from those of us who appreciate how special THNA is, AND the full attention of the City of FW Parks Dept. and City Council.

Please take time to visit the flowering hills of Tandy Hills Nature Area (Lomas de

Flores). Your visit there will lead to an understanding and appreciation which will, in turn, lead to a desire to protect and preserve this amazing prairie park.

Don Young

PS: Prairie Fest is 2 weeks away. The wildflowers at THNA are expected to peak about then. Don't miss it!

Friends of Tandy Hills Nature Area
P.O. Box 470041
Fort Worth, TX 76147
817-731-2787
<http://www.fortworthprairiefest.org>