



# THE TEXAS SAGE

Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter

Volume 18, Number 2

February 2006

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## The President's Corner

Greetings,

Have you watered your yard? I hope so. You see, evergreen plants cannot drop their leaves during a major drought like a post oak can. Far too often the first warning sign that an evergreen needs water is about 3 weeks too late. Remember to water deeply and infrequently.

I was delighted that our first garden show of the season went so well. The loss of Howard Garrett's name from the show cut its attendance by half, yet we were kept busy talking natives pretty much non-stop for three days. We handed out over a 1,000 copies of our recommended native plant list at the show. I look at these as planting seeds of thought. Worst case scenario, as people throw the list away, the term native plants will cross their minds for the second time, even if just for a few seconds. Then every other case is simply better. My favorite pitch was "Can I give you a list of native plants that already like your yard?" This would normally stop people in their tracks. As I handed them our plant list I would add, "You don't have to train or adapt native plants, and they already love your yard." Easily one out of five people would then want more information.

This was an organic home and garden show. What could be more earth friendly than native plants? Yet of the three main garden shows we are doing, this was the smallest one.

Our next big show is the Fort Worth Home & Garden show at the convention center on February 10, 11 and 12. Yep, that is the day after our normal meeting, again. This is our normal spring show and it is always a great one. Then we have the Neil Sperry show in Arlington on February 24 – 26, which had about 18,000 tickets sold at the door last year. This is an experiment that costs us around \$200; we are splitting the cost of the booth with the Texas Master Naturalists Cross Timber chapter. This way we have one of our people with one of theirs for three days. It's not an accident; we already have a large number of TMN members as NPSOT members. How about more?

I believe in planting seeds. In 1991 I picked up my first NPSOT pamphlet at Neil Sperry's first garden show. There I met and listened to Sally and Andy Wasowski for the first time. My first meeting with the legendary Benny Simpson followed that. He also had the NPSOT pamphlet. I never stood a chance. The NPSOT seed was planted that day. From that day on I was a native plant freak. Still it took a full decade before I became a member of NPSOT. Now, I'll always be a NPSOT member. Although we lost Mr. Simpson years ago and the Wasowskis have long since moved away, we too can plant seeds. Volunteer to greet and hand out material on native plants during any of our upcoming shows. You will make a difference.

If you have any thoughts on how to bring in new members, e-mail me, please. Last, I would like to thank all the volunteers from our group and the TMN who staffed our booth. Y'all made the organic show work. I was very impressed by both groups.

Thanks,

John Bridges

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February meeting: Thursday, February 10, 7:00 pm, Fort Worth Botanic Gardens, Deborah Beggs Moncrief Garden Center, Orchid Room

Our speaker will be Steven Chamblee, Horticulture Director of Chandor Gardens in Weatherford. He will present a program on the history of the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens

## Garden Cuttings at the Southwest Subcourthouse *Gailon Hardin*



What was the rain amount in 2005? Twenty inches, maybe less? January 1 brought us a record high of 83 degrees, wildfires spread throughout Texas, and I just heard Finrock say this is the driest we've been in 50 years. Did you also know we're going to be 5 million acre-feet short of water in 2050? These are a few reminders why we need to use native plants.

This is also why we have demonstration gardens. We show the public a beautiful garden that needs minimal watering, has lots of color, and requires less maintenance than lawns. This month our volunteers cut seeds and even removed a few goldenrod and ironweed. We like these plants, but we want to keep them in check. Donna Morris, Janice Ghaddar, Earnie O'Donnell, Carol Norfleet, Sally Porter, Hilda Cassidy, and Pat Lovejoy trimmed the remaining salvia azure and bluemist flower and raked the Lindheimer's muhly. We picked up trash the wind left us, and Earnie found a large animal hole. He did not think it was a rabbit home and no one knew what or who it might belong to. It is, however, nice to know we have animals that enjoy our garden as much as we do.

Please join us on February 11 and 22 to help with the garden and learn more about natives. We will dig several desert willows, separate one very large Lindheimer's muhly, and share it with volunteers.

## Southwestern Regional Library Demonstration Garden *Evaline Woodrey*

In the middle of December three brave souls, Cisy Gray, Peggy Clement and Joyce Miller, came to the garden to help. Were they brave or did they just need a break from the hustle and bustle of the season? It turned out to be a brisk but lovely day to work.

We trimmed, weeded, picked up trash, and trimmed some more. In October we planted a Texas persimmon tree to replace a wax myrtle that had been declining over several years because its site was too dry. We also planted some *Dalea greggii*, hoping it will fill in where the blue grama grass has not worked out from (just guessing) too much water.

We would like to construct some type of compost bin and have the okay from both the library and the Parks Department. We need ideas as well as hands-on expertise. If anyone could help with this project, please contact me at 817-295-4683.

I was so grateful for the help in December. I've had very little help the past year in contrast to previous years. We will be working the fourth Thursday of each month at 10 am thru March. In April we will start work at 8:30 for the summer months. Contact Ev Woodrey at 817-295-4683 for additional information.



## Free Mulch Available

If you need mulch (that's free mulch), please go to J Davis Tree Service at 4206-A Broadway Avenue in Haltom City. They will load your pickup for you and you drive home with Mother's finest topping for your garden. Remember: This year's mulch is next year's compost.

## Raffle Thanks

Thanks to all for bringing a raffle item. The proceeds pay for our room at the Botanic Gardens. We encourage all who win to bring a raffle item the following month. Where is our "Traveling PIG"?

Designs in Nature - Mexican buckeye

Gailon's Gardens - desert willow

Green Mama's - \$10.00 Gift Cert

Hester Schwartzner - Native plants seeds and magnet

Evaline Woodrey- NPSOT canvas bag

Molly Hollar - Garden Book and Plant Stake

## Native Plants Wanted *Marilyn Sallee*

The Fort Worth Nature Center would appreciate donations of plants for their butterfly garden in the courtyard. Please bring any you'd like to donate to the meetings or contact Marilyn Sallee at 817-471-7388 or [marilynsallee@uwmmail.com](mailto:marilynsallee@uwmmail.com). Here's a list of what's needed:

beautyberry	coral honeysuckle	Mexican hat
bee balm / horsemint	crossvine	purple coneflower
black-eyed susan	flame acanthus	scarlet sage
blue mistflower / wild ageratum	foxglove	sedges
bluebonnet	gayfeathers	snailseed
butterfly weed	inland sea oats	western ironweed
cliff fern	ironweed	winecup
coralberry	Maximillian sunflower	yuccas of all kinds

We also welcome donations of native shade plants and native plants for wet areas and bogs. Thanks in advance for your help.

## Native Plant Spring Symposium: Native Plants as Habitat



**Saturday, February 25, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm**  
**Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Auditorium**

Registration: \$75 per person

Hosted by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the Native Plant Society of Texas

Our Spring Symposium will include a plenary session reviewing the ecological aspects of native plants as habitat, followed by an in-depth afternoon of break-out sessions. We will address specific animal and plant relationships and review current biological research as related to native plant ecology. Visit our website, [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org), for complete information and registration.

## Third Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference

**May 25-28, 2006 in Nacogdoches, Texas**

The Stephen F. Austin State University Pineywoods Native Plant Center in Nacogdoches, Texas, is proud to host the Third Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference in association with the Cullowhee Native Plant Conference at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC.

Join a unique blend of plant enthusiasts, nursery professionals, landscapers, botanists and horticulturists to hear nationally known speakers address region-specific topics such as East Texas ecosystems, landscape use, invasive and exotic plants and conservation efforts.

Enjoy local flora on fabulous field trips including a mature oak-hickory-beech forest and box canyon, Weches outcrop, xeric uplands, mesic bottomlands, pitcher plant bogs, outstanding nurseries and a local reintroduction site for endangered species.

Learn from hands-on workshops with topics including edible natives, propagation, photography, tissue culture, dendrology, herbaceous plant i.d., and creating hypertuffa containers for your natives.

For more information visit <http://pnpc.sfasu.edu>.

## Molly Hollar Wildscape at Veterans Park *Molly Hollar*



What an extraordinary fall and winter we've had. Instead of our usual fall rains we had a fifty-year drought, high temperatures, dry winds, and many devastating grass fires.

Then, at last, two and a half inches of slow, steady, wonderful rain! It looks like spring is coming, after all. Our wildscape volunteers have had to spend most of their time watering to ensure the survival of native plants not yet established.

After the rain the waterfall rushed over the boulders, making beautiful sounds. Beside the pavilion boardwalk, standing water several inches deep once again produced a seasonal wetland. Winter honeysuckle's fragrant blooms attracted loads of bees and butterflies. Little green leaves poking up from the bases of dormant plants and leaf buds growing fatter on tree branches signal spring's coming explosion of colorful blooms and leaves.

Hundreds of faithfully watered plants in the erosion area now display tiny green rosettes. Volunteers have begun cutting back the brown leaves of dormant plants to make way for spring's wildflowers and grasses.

Arlington Parks and Recreation Dept. surprised us by building new, stronger reinforced doors for the three kiosks adjoining the parking lot to deter vandalism. APRD continues to strongly support the wildscape in so many ways, including moving mulch to convenient locations for volunteers to use in resurfacing the inner trails. This task is done regularly by Mike Warren's Tarrant County Juvenile Services contingent. APRD's Jay Falgout and Martin Sanchez are always

ready to support and assist us in any way they can.

At the APRD greenhouse, Pat Lovejoy leads wildscape propagators in growing native plants for the wildscape and for the spring plant sales, which Pat will coordinate again this year. APRD's Heather Dowell, Lucy King, and Jo Wolfenberger make that project fun with their unfailing support and help. Another great greenhouse ally is Glenn



*A Parks crew installs a new rustic fence at the overlook bench.*

Troutman, Parks Board member, who does all the heavy soil mixing.

The great new compost area continues to educate the community with ongoing compost classes while its faithful Master Composters produce many loads of black gold to improve our soil. Wildscape volunteers spread this compost regularly, with Devanie Fergus and Anne Alderfer taking the lead. Park visitors who have become wildscape volunteers complete our crew of gardeners and propagators.

Perhaps the longest enduring volunteer is Ann Trenton, who has been a faithful and regular wildscape volunteer over too many years to count. Ann is also a member of ACC, NPSOT, Master Composters, Friends of the Library, and other worthwhile organizations. Master Naturalist Patsy Tucker continues helping to upgrade kiosk

displays. The "Wildscape Residents" kiosk will soon display another group of photos of wildlife seen here, including a raccoon (courtesy of John Davis), a grass snake (courtesy of Jan Miller), and an armadillo (courtesy of Vicki Brady). Several sightings of bobcats have also been reported. Our resident screech owl lives in the owl house provided and installed years ago by David Hurt of Wild Birds Unlimited in Dallas. We remember when David shinnied up the tree to install the owl house 20 feet above the ground.

To celebrate spring's dazzling display, ACC's fundraiser this year will be a **Workshop on Creating a Wildscape in Your Own Yard on April 29**. Rosa Finsley, Landscape Architect and native plant authority, and John Davis, Urban Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept., will lead this workshop. Tentative plans are for Rosa to cover design and native plant material while John will instruct participants in water use and ordinances. The 9:00-12:00 morning workshop will probably include a box lunch picnic if weather permits. Details will be announced soon.

**The wildscape's spring native plant sale will follow the workshop from 1:00- 4:00 pm.** This year we will have a good selection of Texas native plants, many grown from seeds and cuttings taken from plants indigenous to this area. Included in the sale will be two beautiful native roses, the prairie rose and the swamp rose. Another plant sale feature will be coral honeysuckle, a great hummingbird favorite that blooms to coincide with hummingbirds' stay in this area.

Put April 29 on your calendar for the wildscape plant sale and a ticket to the wildscape workshop featuring Rosa Finsley and John Davis.

Don't forget: Tuesday workdays from 9:00-12:00 or 1:00-4:00. Water and snacks will be provided. Bring gloves and pruners or loppers if you have them.

## Online Information

Austin College and the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT) have a free online download of Shinnery & Mahler's *Illustrated Flora of North Central Texas*. The download is 8 pdf files that total 56.2 MB. The 1626 page book sells for around \$90. <http://artemis.austincollege.edu/acad/bio/gdiggs/NCTXpdf.htm>

The Native Plant Society of Texas along with the Native Prairie Association of Texas have a Yahoo group. You got questions, we got answers. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NPSOT-NPAT/>

The United States Department of Agriculture is offering a book to you and/or your organization. It's *Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests*. You can request up to 40 copies via email ([pubrequest@srs.fs.usda.gov](mailto:pubrequest@srs.fs.usda.gov)), phone (828-257-4830), or mail (Southern Research Station, PO Box 2680, Asheville, NC 28802). If you need larger quantities for nonprofit redistribution, please contact Pearley Simmons at 828-257-4830 to discuss options for reducing Federal delivery costs or arrangements for internal delivery within your organization.

This book can also be viewed and downloaded from three websites for further self-instruction and instruction of others at: <http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/viewpub.jsp?index=5424>  
[http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/fia/manual/exotic\\_pests\\_plants.htm](http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/fia/manual/exotic_pests_plants.htm)  
 and an HTML format at <http://www.invasive.org/eastern/srs/>

## Special Thanks

Thank you, Edith Pewett, for purchasing a Lifetime Membership in NPSOT. We appreciate your generous gesture.

## Garden refreshments for the coming growing season *John Snowden*

Our native plant gardens have gone to sleep for the winter, except for our cool-season plants. Even those are waiting for the longer days and warmer temperatures of spring to energize their spring growth and flowering. Gradually their rosettes get a little thicker as the highs and lows, wet and DRY of winter pass, until it rains, temperatures begin to rise, and the days get significantly longer.

The rest of our plants, however, need some assistance to be ready for springtime. Now, this is Texas, a prairie state. Most of our herbaceous native plant landscaping is from the prairie. Our current drought illustrates quite well what is best for prairie plants to be refreshed for the coming year: a burn. This is legally not permitted, of course, and practically impossible now since we have cut up the prairie into small chunks and put houses on it. We must do our best to mimic mother nature without the use of fire.

Treat your own backyard as a sort of miniature prairie. Natural prairie fires could sweep great expanses, but would leave little "backwater" areas alone. These arroyos, waterways, brushy areas and hilltops would not be evenly burned, if at all. Yet, those same areas might get burned the next year, or in two years, but eventually they would burn.

So, let's mimic that. We need to remember that a lot of native animals are our gardening partners. They pollinate, aerate, spread seeds and sometimes just keep us company with their presence in our garden. They can spend the winter as eggs (in stems aboveground or in the ground), pupae (in the top layers of dirt or in piles of leaves), or hibernating in piles of leaves or brush piles or under rocks. So, if we cut back, mow, shred or prune all at once, we remove all the natural habitat, and all the eggs, pupae, food sources, and hibernators at the same time. It means that next year you start out with a much smaller population of the butterflies, beetles, toads, small snakes and other animals you love, and a lot less cover and food for rabbits, if you trim everything in one weekend and call it "done".

I suggest that you do it in stages, and not all of it every year. Leave some spots here and there for your beloved gardening partners to return and help out again. When I cut my fields, I leave some sections intact. I cut all the grasses, herbaceous perennials and invasive woodies, but then I leave the cuttings as a mulch. It never builds up much. When I examine the herbaceous mulch, I find evidence of the last clipping, traces of the clipping before that, and humus below. This mulching helps the prairie grasses and wildflowers in my fields retain soil moisture for their roots, shelters the insects that contribute to their growth, and of course encourages the decomposers.

Let's take it in stages, from the top down. Winter is a good time to trim back low-hanging tree limbs and those brushy natives which are invading our sunny areas. The plants are dormant; they will not try to grow back until after spring arrives. You don't want to trim in late summer. The regrowth is tender when the first frost comes, and is killed back. Leave a few

## Garden Refreshments *continued from page 5*

low-hanging branches off to one side or in a corner. That is cover, perching space, a sense of security for small sparrows and rabbits, and for some, nesting space next spring. Let the rest of the garden grow this year, cut those leftover hanging limbs next winter. Do you have coralberry? It can be pretty invasive. Cut about a quarter each month, December to March. Those berries are food for mockingbirds, brown thrashers, robins and other birds. The seeds are food for mice and rats. The birds prepare the seeds for germination, then drop them along fencelines and other good spots for the growth of more coralberry. The same applies to possumhaw and other shrubs with winter berries. So, you are encouraging the spread of native plants!

You could shred the trimmings, make a mulch, and use it around the bases of your plants during the year. Not bad, but remember: Some insects overwinter as eggs in the bark of woody plants. If you see an odd "growth" on a tree branch, looking a bit like a hardened, comb-like spitball, DON'T SHRED IT. That may well be the egg casing of a praying mantis! Mantises are among our best gardening friends, with a voracious appetite for bad bugs. Shredding reduces their numbers. What about breaking up some of those branches by hand and placing them carefully underneath your shrubs with the mulch? More of the eggs survive and hatch out more of your gardening partners next year. As the mulch decomposes, our own native decomposing arthropods and worms will be nourished. They in their turn aerate the soil and return nutrients to it so that our native plants flourish. NEVER bag your trimmings unless you are giving them to a friend who will use them in their own garden.

One notable exception to winter trimming is coral honeysuckle. It should be trimmed in August. It regrows during the winter, preparing for that wonderful springtime flower show. You should treat the cuttings as above, just during warmer weather! If you have more than one plant, leave one uncut each year as a refuge over winter. If not, leave a portion somewhere. There is a hawk moth, a wonderful bumblebee mimic, that lays its eggs on coral honeysuckle. Leave them some areas to grow on.

What about my own specialty, the native grasses? The larger ones often provide winter shelter for insects, rabbits, and others. There are some migratory, tiny sparrows that shelter in and feed on the seeds of native grasses during the winter, so gradually, not suddenly, cutting those and other shelter plants back is important, leaving other shelter nearby. Cut the fully dormant grasses to the ground; that's all dead material. Cut active plants like gulf muhly to about 8". They need that much green foliage to support themselves in the springtime. Cut large grasses on warm days, in the afternoon. I have seen large populations of ladybugs sheltering in switchgrass. Waiting until it is warm, when they are actively flying around and not trapped by winter cold, forces them to find a new shelter that night. If you cut the switchgrass when it is cold, you are leaving a lot of friendly native gardening helpers out in the cold, lethargic and unable to find new shelter before they die. In good years I have an excellent population of rabbits, mice and rats in my fields. Correspondingly, great horned owls, screech owls, and red-tailed hawks raise families on my property, and in the winter I usually see sharp-shinned hawks and Cooper's hawks. You provide the food and habitat, you reap the rewards.

You COULD rake out the old foliage of Lindheimer's muhly on a nice, dry day (we seem to have a lot of those lately). Here's another approach: I have gotten excellent results from using a weedwhacker (.105 diameter line, it's a big one) to trim the clump to about 8", then let it grow back. That's the demo specimen featured on my website, including the butterfly picture. I do the trimming right about now, and the plant starts to regrow immediately.

What about our herbaceous perennials? Trim them in portions, and let the stems fall to the ground. Where the stems seem a bit large, break them by hand. Our decomposers will thank you by helping those perennials grow back better this year. If there is not much on the ground, consider adding some well-decomposed compost as a mulch layer, about an inch thick. It acts to hold back some of that precious drip irrigation you are using during these drought times. That keeps the soil moist, and the decomposers are still in good shape for their springtime jobs. Remember to water! Just remember also to water WISELY, with the occasional deep soak and the use of drip irrigation instead of a lot of wasteful, fine-droplet, high-angle spraying. A couple of minutes with a hand hose is not worth near as much to our plants' roots as a half-hour with a soaker hose or dripline. County extension agent Dotty Woodson presented some very good information on drip irrigation on Sunday, 22 January, early on Channel 5. Check it out online or call Channel 5 or her office.

Lastly, my yard is full of post oaks that always produce tremendous numbers of fallen leaves. I've noticed huge, fat caterpillars wallowing around on the ground in the fall. I asked Joanne Karges about them, and she said they are *Polyphemus* moths, 4-horned elm moths, even *Io* moths. They are roaming the dead leaves, looking for just the right spot to make their cocoon and overwinter in those leaves. Often, when walking through the yard in the springtime, I kick over some leaves and discover the abandoned cocoons left behind. Hawk moths would be making a pupa in the shallow dirt right underneath, and I often find smaller moths' pupae in the potted plants I divide during the winter. So, in normal winters, with regular rainfall, I mow these leaves in portions, a bit at a time. I NEVER BAG MY LEAVES. I always shred them in

## Garden Refreshments *continued from page 6*

batches, to give these gardening friends a chance to escape. That won't work for the cocoons, which cannot move, so I leave good-sized piles off to the sides, along fencelines, and under my inland seaoats, to slowly decompose. Of course, this is far from a normal winter. Because of the high fire danger I was forced to mow the entire yard and clear out a lot of those corner leaf piles. It's a shame, but this time I had to choose between a protecting my house or my gardening friends. There are a lot of areas on the land here which do NOT get cleared, so if they don't burn, I'll still have some refuges for those insects.

It's not just insects, either! Those piles of leaves are where I often find hibernating Gulf coast and Woodhouse toads, even rough earth snakes. Those gardening friends help consume the bad bugs, the hurtful insects in the springtime. The leaf piles also are a shelter for new post oak seedlings during the winter after a mast (heavy acorn production) year. They are the next generation, so if you are thinking long-term and need a little shade over in that area, leave a couple to grow larger in the springtime.

The most important lessons to remember are to stage it out, don't trim it all at once, and leave your clippings on the ground to decompose. That way your gardening friends can return to help your plants do their very best in the next growing season and to brighten your garden with their activities and colors.

John Snowden  
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## Special Workshop and Spring Plant Sale



### Create a Wildscape in Your Yard

Presented by Rosa Finsley,  
 Landscape Architect and Native Plant Authority  
 and John Davis,  
 Urban Biologist, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department  
**Saturday, April 29, 9:00 am – 12:00**  
 Arlington Location To Be Announced

### Followed by Spring Native Plant Sale

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm  
 Veterans Park, Arlington



Rosa Finsley and John Davis will lead this workshop. Tentative plans are for Rosa to cover design and native plant material while John will instruct participants in water use and ordinances. The morning workshop will probably include a box lunch picnic if weather permits. For more information contact Marian Hiler at 817-277-3998 or [mernhome@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mernhome@sbcglobal.net).



Chapter President  
 North Central Chapter  
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 2311 Perkins Rd  
 Arlington, TX 76016

## Next Meeting

**Thursday, February 10**

7:00 pm

Fort Worth Botanic Gardens

Steven Chamblee  
 Horticulture Director,  
 Chandor Gardens  
*History of the Fort Worth  
 Botanic Gardens*

Visit us on the Web at  
[www.txnativeplants.org](http://www.txnativeplants.org)

## Join the Native Plant Society of Texas!

We invite you to become a member of the Native Plant Society of Texas. Membership is open to any individual, family, or organization. Membership is renewable annually and extends for a year from the date we receive your original payment.

If you wish to join, please indicate your category of membership, then clip and mail this application along with the appropriate remittance to:

Native Plant Society of Texas  
 P.O. Box 891, Georgetown, TX 78627  
 512-868-8799 or 512-931-1166

<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Group	\$35
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$100
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## THE TEXAS SAGE

is a monthly publication of the North Central Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas.

For changes of address or information about contributing to the newsletter, please contact the newsletter editor.

The deadline for submitting articles for inclusion in next month's newsletter is the 15th of every month.

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*The Texas Sage* is printed on recycled paper.