

George W. Bush Presidential Center

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! See how the seeds hang of the SIDE of the stalk? 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 native grass?</p>
	<p>2. Crushed Stone 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: Rain 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. Can you find any other types of shelters on your walk? Keep an eye out for any!</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 and Tall Goldenrod, elsewhere in the park) provide food for the monarch during its fall migration. We have both host plants and nectar plants in this park. Many other butterflies visit the park, too.</p>	<p>Let's talk about it:</p> <p>Can you see any butterflies today? What is one thing you can do at home to promote a butterfly habitat?</p>

	<p>6. Turkscap—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 the Fall 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 our 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. When it has water below, the wet prairie will be green. If dry, it will be brown. Plants include Little Bluestem, Bushy Bluestem, and Inland Sea Oats.</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 yellow 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 are 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 food made with pecans?</p>
	<p>11. BONUS STOP! 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
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