



## #2 WILDSCAPE

This garden is an example of landscaping with native plants. Plants natural to this area have developed here over thousands of years and are heat and drought tolerant, requiring almost no watering! Their long root systems minimize water run-off. Their seeds, berries, and nectar are vital food sources for butterflies, birds, bats, and other pollinators. Native plants on your property save time, water, and give you a wildlife show!



## #3 EDGE HABITAT

Any spot where 2 ecoregions come together is called an "edge" area, or ecotone. In this example, prairie and forest meet. Any edge contains a rich diversity of plants which are food and protection for animals. In the shelter of brush and trees, songbirds find



safety and rest. Mammals like the coyote and fox lie in wait to feed on rabbits and mice on the prairie, and red-tailed hawks and owls have a good view of the insects, small birds and reptiles they pursue from their perches in the tops of trees.



## #4 LIMESTONE PRAIRIE



From here you can view a very small section of the Blackland Prairies of North Central and Central Texas, which once stretched over 12 million acres. Here, limestone lays only inches under the rich soil. You may note white chalk limestone outcrops

throughout the prairie. These grasses, trees and shrubs you see are well adapted to flourish in these soil conditions. Changes in the seasons bring changes to the plants, trees and wildlife calling the preserve home.

See the boxes on poles? Eastern Bluebirds, once common, became almost extinct. House Sparrows and European Starlings, both introduced to North America from Europe, were aggressive and competitive with the bluebirds. All 3 prefer to make cavity type nests. The boxes on poles that you see are monitored havens for the bluebirds.



## #5 FOREST

You are now entering the bottomland forest. Early settlers, who logged most of the timber around streambeds a century ago, left Spring Creek Forest untouched. Upon his first walk in these woods in 1980, Bobby Scott knew that this forest was unique. Two years later when he showed it to city officials they agreed. With the help of Dallas County and the State of Texas, Garland began its efforts to protect this relic forest of Chinquapin, Bur, and Shumard oaks. Many of these trees, some as old as 500 years, soar to heights of 100 feet! Enter, explore, and enjoy!



## #6 RIPARIAN FOREST



"Riparian forest" defines the woodland that borders creeks and rivers. It is an important part of the creek's ecology, acting as a filter for sediment and pollutants in surface runoff. Its trees provide shade for aquatic plants and animals, and

strengthen the creek banks. Spring Creek experiences periodic flooding, and without this transitional area, the banks and soil would wash away. An ecosystem of specialized plants and grasses has developed which actually survive and even benefit from flooding. Spring Creek's riparian world is important to the creek in many ways, and care must be taken that any nearby development will always leave these streamside woodlands in place.

## #7 HEALTHY DIVERSITY

The strength of a forest (or any other ecosystem) is measured by its biodiversity. Forests are biologically diverse systems, representing some of the richest biological areas on Earth. They offer a variety of habitats for plants, animals and micro-organisms. Just



take a look around you at the perfect example of this. Notice the variety of huge, old growth trees and the layers and multitude of plant life that makes up the understory. Here are just a few you may spot: rusty blackhaw viburnum, wild grapevine, Carolina buckthorn and coralberry, all of which play a role in providing shelter and food for a variety of wildlife. Imagine how many micro-organisms are living around you and beneath your feet on the forest floor. Biodiversity boosts ecosystem productivity because each species, no matter how small, plays an important role in sustaining the life of the ecosystem. The richness of diversity is such that, for example in this forest, if one species or even a generation of trees is reduced - even wiped out - many other species can fill in the gap to support all forms of life in the forest



## #8 SNAGS

Here you can see a snag, a standing dead or dying tree. You may think that it is unpleasant to view. It may seem out of place among all the beautiful features of the forest, but it plays a vital part in maintaining the biodiversity (variety of life) of the Spring Creek Forest. Snags serve as a food source for insect borers, are the means of communication between drilling and drumming species like the Downy or Red-Bellied Woodpeckers, and finally, when they've decomposed, they return to the forest floor as rich soil.



## #9 POISON IVY

Don't touch the poison ivy! Unlike humans, many creatures of the forest benefit from poison ivy. Herbivores (animals that eat plants) such as deer and raccoons eat the leaves and stems. Cardinals and other birds eat the berries, and little creatures like toads find poison ivy a useful shelter from predators.

Poison ivy grows in many forms. Here, it's a climbing vine.



Poison ivy has deep roots. Early settlers knew this and actually planted poison ivy along some creeks to control erosion. Remember, "Leaves of three -let them be" and "berries white, take flight".

