

Wildscape Update **John Dycus**



Mutual uplift is a glorious thing, and hopefully the high school students in the Hugh O'Brian Youth (HOBY) program enjoyed their wildscape tour on May 17 as

much as the volunteers liked showing them around. Living up to their advance billing as potential leaders, the 38 students were eager to assist with mulching trails, weeding and replanting the original meadow. One young person was so engaged she said she plans to return from Dallas to help in the wildscape again.

Ann Knudsen recruited, organized and led volunteers for the event. The HOBY group was almost an hour late, but the volunteers stayed overtime to complete the already laid-out planting and water it in. Molly Hollar consulted with wildscape landscape architect Rosa Finsley in planning the restoration, oversaw stonework and directed the replanting.

Every year an outstanding sophomore is chosen from each high school in North Central Texas to attend the four-day, expenses-paid HOBY leadership seminar (at TCU this year). We're honored that the wildscape made the list of approved sites to learn from and explore.

Welcome, HOBY cats. Come back any time.

Highly drought-resistant plants now grace the entry area, thanks to a nearly \$10,000 grant from the Arlington Parks and Recreation Department to replant this patch and restore the pond and waterfall. Another \$10,000 came from sales of plants grown by wildscape volunteers in the greenhouse.

This area was originally seeded as a meadow with wildflowers, but a leak in the park's irrigation system drowned the buffalo grass, and the bluebonnets were trampled by people plopping down and looking cute/playful/innocent/seductive for photos.

The new plants, all of them Texas natives from farther west, need perfect runoff to keep from rotting during the

occasional deluge between droughts. An 18-inch raised bed and the addition of lava sand provide this essential drainage. They should be established after a couple of years and then are expected to have rooted deeply enough to survive with only rainfall. One or two waterings a year will keep them blooming.

Soaker hoses have been installed and covered with decomposed granite mulch. Soakers and drip irrigation save water, since traditional sprinkler irrigation loses 50 percent to evaporation. A sign and a kiosk will explain this water-conserving landscape and identify the plants used.

Farther along, the vandalized low-level waterfall has been restored and stone steps to the water and more boulders added to enhance one of the most popular places in the wildscape. Repair of the small pond is expected to be complete soon. Thanks again, Rosa Finsley, for directing this restoration.

Note that volunteer hours will change to begin and end an hour earlier to avoid the summer heat — 8:00-11:00 am.

