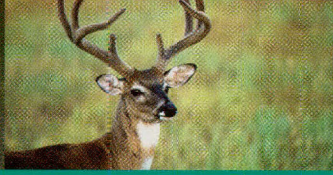


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## PROTECT YOURSELF FROM SEVERE WEATHER

*These tips can help you stay safe*

Severe weather season in Central Texas peaks in the spring and the fall, but flash floods, lightning and tornadoes can happen any time of the year. Here's how to stay safe when severe weather strikes.

### Flash floods

Central Texas is among the most flood-prone regions in the United States. From 1960 to 1995, nearly 4,500 people in the United States died in flash floods, and more than half of these deaths involved vehicles. Texas ranked first with 610 lives lost, followed by 255 in California and 248 in South Dakota.

Many storm-related drownings can be prevented if drivers avoid flooded streets and low-water crossings. Even heavy cars and trucks can become buoyant and be swept away in just two feet of water. If you come upon a flooded street or crossing, remember to turn around – don't drown.

### Lightning

Lightning tends to strike tall objects and metal objects. Get into a sturdy building or car – not in sheds, under trees or in convertibles. Get out of boats and water, and avoid electrical appliances and phones. If you're caught outside with no shelter available, crouch low with only your toes touching the ground to minimize ground contact. If the hair on your head and neck rises during a storm, lightning may be about to strike your spot. Avoid touching anything metal and seek shelter or crouch low, away from tall objects.

### Tornadoes

If you're outside, don't try to outrun a tornado – its path is unpredictable. Get far away from your vehicle and crouch down in a ditch, ravine or culvert. Check first for hazards – a nearby storm drain can quickly fill a ditch, and culverts may contain poisonous snakes or insects. Sheltering beneath an overpass may actually expose you to higher winds and flying debris.

If you're inside, move to a basement or ground-level room, but stay alert to the danger of flooding. Pick a small room –

bathroom, closet or hallway – in a central location with as many walls as possible in all directions. Crouch low with head covered. Do not stay in a mobile home – move to a more substantial structure if possible.

### Weather alerts

Severe weather can happen suddenly. Buy a weather radio to hear severe weather broadcasts from the National Weather Service. Radios are on sale for \$29.59 for a limited time at participating H-E-B stores in Central Texas. Also stay tuned to local TV and radio stations for weather updates.



Bob Rose, LCRA's chief meteorologist, can be reached at 1-800-776-5272, Ext. 3350, or bob.rose@lcra.org.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- A "severe weather watch" means conditions are favorable for severe weather in or near the watch area. Watches are issued for tornadoes, severe thunderstorms and floods.
- A "severe weather warning" means severe weather is imminent or occurring in the warning area. Warnings are issued for tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, floods and flash floods.

## GOODBYE LAND LINE, HELLO CURRENTS

If you've enjoyed reading Land Line, you'll love Currents, a new e-mail newsletter with helpful tips, resources and information for people who live, work and play in Texas. Don't miss the first issue of Currents – visit [www.lcra.org](http://www.lcra.org) to sign up for your free subscription today.

Inside this issue:

- Protect yourself from severe weather
- Land conservation in Llano County
- Summer survival tips for landscapes
- When to rescue wildlife babies
- Pick-your-own produce farms
- Tree spotlight: Desert Willow
- New RV park opens at Matagorda Bay



# CHANAS RANCH CONSERVATION PROJECT

*At home on the range in Llano County*

**A** hint of the Old West still lingers in Llano County, where Rodney Hooten, manager of the 16,000-acre Chanas Ranch, starts his day much like the frontier cowboys of long ago.

Hooten makes his way by horse across the range to a 700-acre pasture, where the day's goal is to drive a cattle herd to a fresh pasture as part of a prescribed rotational grazing system.

This is where the Old West meets the modern-day rancher. In the late 1800s, settlers began using barbed wire fencing to contain livestock and keep them from destroying valuable crops. But this led to overgrazing that left the ground bare and exposed to invasive brush species such as ashe juniper, also called cedar.

Vast open ranges of grassland slowly underwent dramatic and undesirable changes. Today invasive species like cedar, prickly pear and mesquite are present where native grasses once thrived. The ground below the brush is bare and exposed to heavy soil erosion and rapid rainfall runoff, contributing to sedimentation in nearby lakes, rivers and streams.

Chanas Ranch owner Richard McMillan is taking steps to reverse the damage and restore his land by removing large areas of cedar and mesquite, to allow the return of native grasses. But land restoration and conservation requires more than brush control to be successful. Landowners need to develop a long-range plan with specific land management techniques that benefit the land, wildlife and livestock.

"Brush control is just the first step in our plan to improve and restore this rangeland. The follow-up steps of implementing a rotational grazing system and creating wildlife corridors are just as important," McMillan said.

McMillan is taking part in a regional program that provides financial and technical assistance to landowners for land conservation projects. Landowners can receive up to 50 percent reimbursement for pre-approved projects. The program is funded by a three-year, \$500,000 grant awarded to LCRA by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. LCRA works with local soil and water conservation districts to carry out the program.

The regional program is part of a larger program – the Creekside Conservation Program started by LCRA 15 years ago to help landowners in counties along the lower Colorado River reduce soil erosion and sedimentation.



## HOW TO APPLY FOR A CREEKSIDE CONSERVATION MATCHING GRANT

**First**, contact your local office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS can help you identify soil and water conservation and land management projects that may qualify for matching funds. Eligibility is based on the severity of the problem, the project's compatibility with the program's objectives, and availability of other funding sources.

**Second**, the NRCS submits your project plans to your local Soil and Water Conservation District and LCRA for approval.

**Third**, upon successful completion, LCRA reimburses you up to 50 percent of the actual cost of your pre-approved project. The NRCS and LCRA will review your project annually for three years to monitor success.

**Who can apply:** Landowners in Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Colorado, Fayette, Lampasas, Llano, Matagorda, San Saba, Travis and Wharton counties.

**Eligible projects:** Land management projects such as brush management, slope stabilization, vegetative or riparian buffers along creeks and other waterways, field terracing, sustainable range seeding, land shaping, and rotational grazing systems.

**Information:** 1-800-776-5272, Ext. 2794, or [info@lcra.org](mailto:info@lcra.org).

*Bobby Humphrey, LCRA conservation specialist, can be reached at 1-800-776-5272, Ext. 7155, or [bobby.humphrey@lcra.org](mailto:bobby.humphrey@lcra.org).*

**PHOTO:** Ranch owner Richard McMillan, left, and ranch manager Rodney Hooten stand in front of equipment used for selective brush control.





## CARING FOR YOUR LANDSCAPE THROUGH THE SUMMER

**H**ot, drought-like summer conditions leave Central Texas lawns and gardens thirsty. Here's what you can expect and some things you can do to help your landscape survive the dog days of summer.

### What to expect in your landscape

Plant growth and blooms are triggered by the number of daylight hours, temperature and moisture. Plants adapted to different climate regions respond more or less to these triggers. For example, many desert-adapted plants wait for rain to bloom, while plants in the arctic are very attuned to the number of daylight hours.

How your landscape looks during a dry, hot summer will depend on how well your plants are adapted to local conditions.

Drought-adaptive plants won't look much different in dry weather. Many of these species have silvery leaves that reflect sunlight, tiny leaves that minimize loss of moisture, or thick leaves that store moisture. Here are examples of plants that will look great:

- 🌿 Cenizo, commonly called Texas sage
- 🌿 Red yucca
- 🌿 Damianita

Other plants – even some native or adaptive species – may look stressed in very dry weather. Some plants droop to reduce leaf surface area or even drop their leaves during dry spells to minimize moisture loss. Many plants stop blooming. Others go dormant, turn brown and appear to be dead. The beauty of these plants is that once the rains return, the plants immediately perk up. Here are examples of native plants that might look stressed or go dormant:

- 🌿 Buffalo grass
- 🌿 Turk's cap
- 🌿 Coneflower

### How to help your landscape survive

- 🌿 **Use water wisely.** Water grasses and plants longer but less often, allowing the water to soak into the ground and reach the roots. Water in the early morning or at night to avoid losing water to evaporation. Check irrigation systems for leaks and damaged sprinkler heads.
- 🌿 **Avoid excessive watering.** It can lead to fungal problems and won't necessarily help drooping or dormant plants. Contact your local water utility to find out the recommended watering schedule for your neighborhood.
- 🌿 **Protect your beds.** Add a light layer of mulch – about two to three inches – in beds and around ornamental plants. Remember to irrigate properly so that the moisture penetrates the mulch and saturates the soil below. Use local hardwood mulches.
- 🌿 **Bide your time.** Summer is a dormant season for many plants in Central Texas. New plants need more water and many won't survive a transplant in the summer, especially during a dry spell. When you begin planting again in fall, choose your plants wisely.
- 🌿 **Keep an eye on your plants.** In the heat of summer, healthy plants typically look perky in the early morning but may be drooping in the afternoon. Resist the urge to water unless the soil is dry.

*Elizabeth Drozda-Freeman, LCRA conservation landscape specialist, can be reached at 1-800-776-5272, Ext. 2230, or [elizabeth.drozda-freeman@lcra.org](mailto:elizabeth.drozda-freeman@lcra.org).*

**PHOTO:** *Damianita is a drought-tolerant, deer-resistant native perennial used for borders, specimen plants and groundcover. It thrives in light shade to full sun and has ever-green foliage and fragrant yellow flowers that bloom from mid spring to mid summer.*

### DID YOU KNOW?

Potted plants require more watering in summer – the soil dries out much faster in high temperatures. Painting the inside of unglazed terra cotta pots will seal the pots and help reduce moisture loss.





## ABANDONED OR SAFE?

### WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND YOUNG CREATURES IN THE WILD

**B**aby animals such as birds and fawns can appear to be abandoned in the wild. But don't assume this is the case – chances are their parents are nearby and keeping a close watch on their young.

A state-permitted wildlife rehabilitator recently estimated that in some years 40 percent or more of the fawns brought to her were not injured or orphaned, but instead taken from their mothers by well-meaning rescuers. The percentage likely is higher for “abandoned” baby birds.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department offers these tips on what to do if you come across baby birds or fawns in the wild.

🌿 **Fawns:** Mother deer typically leave their young bedded down while foraging. If a fawn is not crying, not covered with fire ants, and without visible wounds or swollen eyes, leave it alone.

🌿 **Grounded baby birds:** Birds often leave the nest a day or two before they are ready to fly. If a grounded bird appears healthy, look for a parent nearby. Leave the bird in the area, remove predators such as cats if possible, and move the bird under a bush only if it is in a dangerous spot such as the street.

🌿 **Blown-down nests:** Place intact nests and unharmed baby birds or eggs in the nearest tree. Badly damaged nests may be placed in a small basket before being placed in a tree. Secure the nest with twine if necessary.



🌿 **Abandoned nests:** The parents are probably close by gathering food for their babies. Patiently observe the nest from a distance to see if the parent returns. If no parent appears, place twigs around the nest. If the sticks have been disturbed and the babies are still healthy the next day, the parents are still around.

If you are convinced that a baby bird or fawn has been abandoned, leave the animal where you found it unless it is in danger. If you must remove the animal, keep it in a dark, quiet and safe place. Contact a permitted wildlife rehabilitator for advice on what to do next.

### WILDLIFE RESCUE RESOURCES

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Web site has a county-by-county database of permitted wildlife rehabilitators in Texas ([www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/rehab/list](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/rehab/list)). There are also several nonprofit wildlife rescue organizations in Texas, such as Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation at [www.wildlife-rescue.org](http://www.wildlife-rescue.org).

Most rehabilitators are volunteers who work out of their homes and use their own money to pay for animal caging, veterinary care, medicine and food. If you bring an animal to a rehabilitator, please consider making a donation to help pay the cost of its care.

Jarrod Depew, LCRA natural resource conservation coordinator, can be reached at 1-800-776-5272, Ext. 2763, or [jarrod.depew@lcra.org](mailto:jarrod.depew@lcra.org).

**PHOTO:** White-tailed deer are plentiful in the Texas Hill Country, with an estimated population of more than 1.6 million in 2003 (about half were does and a third were fawns). Source: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Web site.



# PICKY ABOUT YOUR PRODUCE?

## Visit a pick-your-own farm

Imagine kneeling in soft rich dirt under the warm summer sun. Rows of green plants stretch into the distance on either side. Your hand hovers over ripe red strawberries dangling among the leaves as you choose the ones to put in your basket.

It's easy to see why picking your own fresh produce can be a refreshing break from the usual grocery store visit. It's also a fun outdoor adventure for the family and an opportunity for kids to learn first-hand where food comes from.

Pick-your-own farms abound along the Colorado River Trail, from the Hill Country to the Gulf Coast. They offer a variety of vegetables, berries and fruits – even pecans in November. The Texas Department of Agriculture's Pick Texas program provides a statewide list of pick-your-own farms at [www.picktexas.com](http://www.picktexas.com).

The Colorado River Trail is a network of highways and roads linking the cultural, recreational, agricultural and natural features of 11 counties along the river. The trail crosses 600 miles of beautiful Texas country, from the pecan orchards of San Saba to the Gulf of Mexico. Visit [www.lcra.org/coloradocolorrivertrail](http://www.lcra.org/coloradocolorrivertrail) for tourism information and links to local chambers of commerce.

### What can you pick?

Here are examples of produce grown at pick-your-own farms along the lower Colorado River:

- blackberries
- blueberries
- figs
- herbs
- peaches
- pecans
- peppers
- persimmons
- potatoes
- pumpkins
- seasonal vegetables
- strawberries

### No time to pick your own?

Then visit your nearest farmers market, where you'll find local growers selling fruits, vegetables, pecans, honey, flowers and other Texas-grown products. But first, you have to find the market. The Texas Department of Agriculture has a list of cities with certified farmers markets at [www.picktexas.com](http://www.picktexas.com).

*Sarah Page, LCRA senior economic development specialist, can be reached at 1-800-776-5272, Ext. 3513, or [sarah.page@lcra.org](mailto:sarah.page@lcra.org).*

**PHOTOS:** Pick-your-own farms in counties along the lower Colorado River grow an abundance of vegetables, nuts and fruits.





## TREE SPOTLIGHT *Desert Willow* *Chilopsis linearis*



**Benefits:** *Excellent ornamental tree, hummingbird-attracting blooms, no major problems.*

**Native Range:** *North American deserts from southern California to southwestern Texas.*

**Texas Range:** *Grows throughout the state with the exception of the Panhandle area.*

**Appearance:** *Small tree, often with multiple trunks and a loose, irregular form. Large, showy orchid-like blooms in white, pink or burgundy. Four- to eight-inch seed pods in the fall.*

**Growth Rate:** *Medium.*

**Problems:** *No insect or disease problems. Since it is not related to the willow family, invasive roots are not an issue.*

**Site Preference:** *Dry site with plenty of sun.*

## HOW TO KEEP YOUR TREES HEALTHY

Trees can be a valuable asset to property owners, so it's a good idea to inspect the health of your trees at least once a year and after major weather events. Slowly check all parts of the tree – the base, the trunk, main stems, branches and branch unions. Binoculars may be needed for tree tops.

### Problems to look for:

- large areas of dead wood
- cracks or deep splits
- weak branch unions
- large, localized wounded areas
- paved-over roots, severed roots, soil mounded over roots
- heavy branches rubbing together
- contact with structures or utility lines

Tree pruning, maintenance and treatment can be tricky, and under no circumstances should you prune a tree that is near a utility line. Instead, contact a professional to answer questions and offer pruning advice. To find a tree-care specialist, look under "Tree Services" in the yellow pages or get recommendations from family and friends. Before hiring anyone to work on your trees, check on qualifications, experience, references, insurance and bonding.

*Janie Bolger, LCRA senior natural resource conservation coordinator, can be reached at 1-800-776-5272, Ext. 2445, or [janie.bolger@lcra.org](mailto:janie.bolger@lcra.org).*



## SUMMER TREE CARE

Be careful how you care for your trees this summer. Keep these guidelines in mind when tending to your trees.

**WATER:** Slow, deep soakings that penetrate the soil and fill the root zone are best for trees. Allow the soil to dry out between watering. Know your trees – some species require little to no watering once they are established.

**MULCH:** Apply three to four inches of aged mulch around the base of trees, especially in the first few years after planting. Keep the mulch three to five inches away from young trunks and eight to 12 inches away from mature tree trunks.

**PRUNE:** Dead or diseased wood can be pruned in late July, but wait until mid-winter to perform major pruning activities.

**FEED:** With the exception of far South Texas, avoid fertilizing trees now. Feeding may stimulate new growth that might be damaged by fall freezes.





## NEW COASTAL RV PARK OPENS AT MATAGORDA BAY

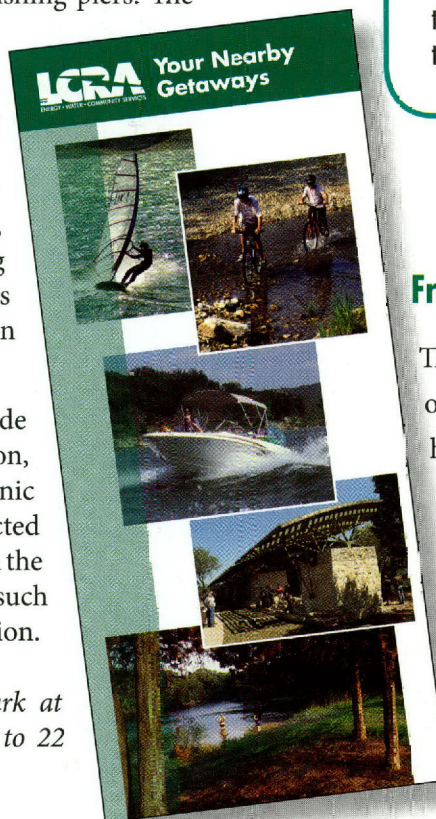
**R**eady for a summer visit to the Texas coast? Then pack up your recreational vehicle and be among the first to visit the new Matagorda Bay Nature Park, a 1,600-acre beachfront park where the lower Colorado River meets the Gulf of Mexico.

The park's 70 new RV sites have full utility hookups and are within easy walking distance of the beach, the river and fishing piers. The park has about two miles of Gulf of Mexico and river frontage and hundreds of acres of coastal marshes and dunes.

Activities include fishing along the shore and from three free public piers – two on the river channel and one on the gulf, beach combing, and bird watching at one of the best birding areas in the nation. Future outdoor programs will include guided kayak trips, angler education and teacher workshops.

LCRA is developing the nature park to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, education, nature tourism and wetlands preservation. Picnic shelters, restrooms and a walking trail are expected to be ready this summer as progress continues on the facilities at the nature park. Other amenities, such as a natural science center, are under construction.

**PHOTO:** Visitors to the new 70-site RV park at Matagorda Bay Nature Park have easy access to 22 miles of beach along the Texas Gulf Coast.



### IF YOU GO

**Open:** Year-round

**Rate:** \$25 a night

**Reservations:** (979) 863-7120

**Directions:** The park is in Matagorda County at the mouth of the lower Colorado River channel and the Gulf of Mexico. Take FM 2031 south from the town of Matagorda. The road ends at the park.

### Free new guide to LCRA parks

The 2006 guide has a new look – order your copy today! The guide has activities, facilities, maps and reservation information for LCRA parks along the Highland Lakes and lower Colorado River. To get your free copy, just fill out the online request form at [www.lcra.org/parks](http://www.lcra.org/parks) or call the park information line at 1-800-776-5272, Ext. 3366.





## LAND LINKS: USEFUL WEB SITES FOR LANDOWNERS

<b>LCRA</b>	<a href="http://www.lcra.org/newsstory/noaaradios.html">www.lcra.org/newsstory/noaaradios.html</a>	News release and list of HEB stores with discounted weather radios.
<b>National Weather Service</b>	<a href="http://www.nws.noaa.gov">www.nws.noaa.gov</a>	National, state and local weather forecasts, watches and warnings.
<b>Creekside Conservation Program</b>	<a href="http://www.lcra.org/community/creekside.html">www.lcra.org/community/creekside.html</a>	Land conservation grants and technical assistance for landowners.
<b>Texas Department of Agriculture</b>	<a href="http://www.picktexas.com">www.picktexas.com</a>	Information on Texas-grown crops, including a directory of local farmers markets and pick-your-own farms.
<b>Hill Country Landscape Option</b>	<a href="http://www.lcra.org/water/conservation.html">www.lcra.org/water/conservation.html</a>	Information on landscape design and maintenance, native plants, watering guidelines and more.
<b>LCRA Parks</b>	<a href="http://www.lcra.org/parks">www.lcra.org/parks</a>	Information about LCRA parks and recreation areas along the Highland Lakes and lower Colorado River.
<b>Wildlife Rescue &amp; Rehabilitation</b>	<a href="http://www.wildlife-rescue.org">www.wildlife-rescue.org</a>	Nonprofit organization for the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of orphaned, injured and displaced wildlife.
<b>Texas Parks &amp; Wildlife Department</b>	<a href="http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/rehab/">www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/rehab/</a>	State regulations for wildlife rehabilitation and database of permitted wildlife rehabilitators in Texas.

This is the final issue of Land Line, which provides information and tips on conserving land and water in the lower Colorado River basin. Don't miss the first free issue of Currents, a new e-mail newsletter with helpful tips, resources and information of interest to people who live, work and play in Texas. Sign up for your free subscription at [www.lcra.org](http://www.lcra.org).

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