



THE WILDFLOWER MEADOW STORY

By Julia Campbell

The decision was made! We cut it—the meadow, that is. We not only cut, we pulled so as to eliminate the seedheads of the Mexican Hat *Ratibida columnaris*. This decision was a difficult one. Some think the meadow should be left as it grows—wildflowers, grasses, weeds, or whatever. This is after all a nature center. The wildflowers are left to reseed themselves. Little creatures hide in the shrubbery. Birds eat the seeds left on faded flower stalks. Shouldn't the meadow look as natural as possible? Some years with timely precipitation the Indian Blanket *Gaillardia pulchella* grows so lush that it has to be cut back from overflowing onto the path. Last year when the rain came at just the right time for the Horsemint *Monarda citriodora*, the meadow was a gorgeous purple blanket. Red Standing Cypress *Ipomopsis aggregata* and White Prickly Poppy *Argemone albiflora* added beautiful, colorful accents.

This year, however, the rain hardly came at all. What this dry period encouraged was the Mexican Hat *Ratibida columnaris*—a perennial with roots, it is said by people at the Bam-

berger Ranch, that can go down as far as 22". This plant has beauty, but it is very aggressive, reseeds prolifically, and therefore crowds out lovely annuals and more desirable perennials. We also have a continuing problem with another perennial, False Ragweed *Parthenium hysterophorus* in the meadow. The best way to reduce and/or eliminate these persistent undesirable perennials, according to experts in the field, is by cutting them down at least once or possibly twice or even three times a year.

Wildflower seeds have been added to the entire meadow every fall and the variety of annuals and perennials is continually being increased especially in the area on both sides of the central path. Consequently, many rare and desirable perennial plants have been added to this area, so it will be excluded from the cutting being done.

There are deer here as well. How should we deal with them? Deer have very poor eyesight and munch mostly on plants that smell

good to them. Therefore, we often hide the precious perennials under plants deer won't eat, and sometimes this technique really works well. The plants survive until they reach a maturity with increased lignin that the deer find unpalatable. Unfortunately, cutting will eliminate that little bit of protection. The wildflower meadow, unfortunately, is actually a wonderful pasture for deer, and they, as well as the rabbits, graze it unceasingly.

The Buildings and Landscape Committee is dedicated to making the meadow a beautiful and educational place to visit. Even in times of drought, our meadow has many beautiful plants to observe. Please come see





RNC's Volunteers of the Month, Jim & Ann Laughlin—A Dynamic



This month our volunteers of the month are actually a “dynamic duo”—they are, Jim and Ann Laughlin. Jim and Ann have three children, one son and two daughters as well as seven grandchildren. They first met in an American History class. Jim planned a double date, setting Ann up with one of his friends. However, it turned out Jim liked Ann better than his date. They were married in 1953, and the rest, as they say, “is history”!

Ann was born and raised in McAllen, Texas. She attended Trinity University in San Antonio and received a degree in Business Administration. She taught school for one year at Mission High School while Jim was in the Army serving in Korea. They moved 20 times the first eight years they were married! They ended up in Richardson, Texas, and were

time Ann and her daughter-in-law started a business manufacturing maternity wear which they sold wholesale at the Dallas Market. They enjoyed this endeavor for eight years.

So how did they end up in Ingram in '95? It seems Ann's parents had owned a place on the North Fork of the Guadalupe River in Hunt. She had spent many summers here, often at a camp. Jim's family had ties to Schreiner University. Back in the 1920's, Jim's father went to school there and became a staff member. In 1949, Jim worked at the Mo Ranch and really got a feel for Kerrville and its surrounding areas. There are fond memories of places throughout Kerr County for both of them.

Eula Roney asked Ann to come to lunch under some of the beautiful trees at RNC before the Visitor Center was constructed. She fell in love with the place, and since there was a gift shop in the Lawson Store, Ann inherited that job. She has been doing it ever since. She orders merchandise for the gift shop, keeping it well-stocked for our visitors. Ann has also served as Vice-President and Secretary of the Board of Directors.

Jim was born and raised in Mexia, Texas. He attended The University of Texas and University of Illinois. His education was in Civil and Environmental Engineering and his expertise is in “Construction

Worked for Chicago Bridge and Iron. In 1961 Jim created a consulting partnership after moving to Dallas. His work with water resources encompassed the entire cycle of water use. As an engineer on a project, Jim would plan the pumping of water, treating it, distributing it, treating of waste water, and returning it clean enough to go back to its source.

Betty Chaney was the one who got Jim involved at RNC in 2000 by asking him to be on the Site Development Committee. This committee worked on a plan for developing the RNC site including the Nature Lab. While the Visitor Center was under construction, Jim was elected Director in 2001, and became President of the Board in 2003. He is currently Past-President, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, and Coordinator for the Meadowview Beautification Project.

Jim and Ann are very active people with many interests. They both love planning the landscape around their home using native, drought and deer resistant plants. They have left some of their property in its natural state. Ann also loves Boston Terriers. She is a member of PEO (Philanthropy Education Organization), the Day-trips Group, Lunch Bunch and is very active in the Presbyterian Church. Jim likes traveling, hunting and fishing. They both do so much for RNC, and their active support is greatly appreciated.

A Very Special THANK YOU for the Gift goes to...

June Donations:

John Miller

Dwight Brown



**WELCOME,
New RNC Members!**

**IMPORTANT
NOTICES:**



DON'T FORGET!!!!

The next time you come by RNC, please don't forget to sign up for our **Adopt-A-Spot Program!** The sign-up binder is in the atrium area of the Visitor Center.

To those of you who have already taken care of this task—**THANK YOU!**



RNC NEEDS THE FOLLOWING:

1. **Small, plastic kids' swimming pool (for some of our live critters' use).**
2. **Helper to do handyman type work, to help set up for various programs/speakers, and the like.**
3. **Someone to care for the newest**



The Riverside Nature Center

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9AM– 4PM Monday— Friday;
10AM-3PM Saturday and Sunday
TREE TRAIL open daily DAWN to DUSK
FREE ADMISSION !!!

RIVERSIDE NATURE CENTER'S MISSION IS TO
FOSTER GREATER PUBLIC AWARENESS AND
APPRECIATION OF THE HILL COUNTRY'S NATURAL
RESOURCES THROUGH EDUCATION, INFORMATION,
AND BY EXAMPLE.

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The Riverside Nature Center Associations is a non-profit, membership-supported organization, founded in 1989, with the mission to foster greater public awareness and appreciations of Texas Hill Country natural resources through education, information and by example.

COMING EVENTS

MARK YOUR CALENDAR !!

AN IMPORTANT EVENT!!!

Sat., July 29th is **River Clean-Up Day** with the Upper Guadalupe River Authority (UGRA)!

- ⇒ Please come help our river become healthier.
- ⇒ With the water level so low, we should be able to get much of the debris out!
- ⇒ The goal is a Trash Free River!
- ⇒ Activities begin at 8 a.m. at the Ingram Boat Ramp, Guadalupe Park, and Kerr County Park

'06 BROWN BAG LUNCH & LEARN

Program Schedule

**Thurs., Sept. 7th,
Seeds: The Fruit
of the Matter
by Barbara Lowenthal
& Linda Riner**



**Thurs., Oct. 12th,
Basic Birding:**