

# UPDATE



BUILDING FOR OUR FUTURE

R. Jack Cagle, Harris County Commissioner



## Pioneer Day THROUGH THE EYES OF A VOLUNTEER

Photo by Paul Roling

**W**hen Jane Hilton sits at her spinning wheel outside the Redbud Hill Homestead at Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center, she not only wears the dress of a Texas settler from the early 1800s, but also adopts the mindset of a pioneer. Each year, Hilton sheds the trappings of her 21st-century life to give Pioneer Day visitors a realistic look into what life was like for early Texas settlers and local Akokisa Indian tribes. “I help visitors see the connections between how things were done 200 years ago and

how things are done today. I teach adults and children how to use a loom. They experience firsthand how cloth is woven and can see that clothes today are woven in just the same way,” Hilton says.

Pioneer Day began in 1986 with just a handful of staff and volunteers. Today, the free annual event attracts more than 2,000 visitors to Jones Park. Staff and nearly 200 volunteers provide up to 40 demonstrations, including blacksmithing, woodworking, cooking, military drills, American Indian crafts, and more. This year’s event will be held **Saturday, November 14 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

### Becoming a Pioneer

Hilton begins to get into the 19th-century mindset the night before the event when she steps into the clothing and life of a pioneer. She and other volunteers and staff prepare meals around an open campfire with a cast-iron Dutch oven and iron implements used in the early 1800s. Canvas tents surround the campsite, and the sounds of electronics are replaced by the sounds of animals and nature.

“It’s a real vacation for me. I have quilts and a sheep skin to keep me warm, and a bowl and pitcher to wash with,” says

See *Pioneer Day*, page 4

A WORD FROM

# Commissioner R. Jack Cagle

**H**arris County Precinct 4 is still growing—and it's not slowing down. Our roads, parks, and services are being used by more and more people every day.

With this population growth, Precinct 4 works to expand its programs and services. Your hardworking staff and more than 1,000 volunteers make this possible. In this issue of *Update* newsletter, we highlight stories about these dedicated

*Whenever we speak with residents, almost every survey on nearly every topic related to quality of life comes back to the pressing need for more and better roads.*

volunteers who together help to provide hundreds of programs and services to Precinct 4 residents each year. So much of what we accomplish in our parks and centers would simply not be possible without these Precinct 4 residents.

Service to others takes many forms in Precinct 4—from leading nature tours and classes to working with children and lending a hand at special events. We invite you to seek out ways to get engaged at our parks, centers, and through our Senior Adult Program.



At every level of county government, we are working to serve more and do more within a framework of rising tax values—but without a rise in tax rates.

The truth is that to maintain our level of service and maintenance of current infrastructure—especially roads—we must account for every single cent.

More people and more cars means heavier use on our roadways and the demand for more lanes and better road access. Whenever we speak with residents, almost every survey on nearly every topic related to quality of life comes back to the pressing need for more and better roads. Residents who drive our economy demand it, their employers demand it, and our families demand it.

With the help of a robust economy and the many volunteers who help us maintain our parks, centers, and programs, I will continue to seek out sources for building the roads we need and continue to grow the parks we want.

I welcome your input and seek your support as we in Precinct 4 and all of Harris County work to keep growing together.

## Sign Up Online!

*Update* newsletter is a publication of Harris County Precinct 4, available to residents free of charge. To receive our monthly e-newsletter, *Commissioner's E-Corner*, visit us online at [www.hcp4.net](http://www.hcp4.net). **Signing up is easy and takes just minutes.** We can also be reached at 281-893-3726, or send your name, address, and email address to the Precinct 4 Communications Department at 1731 Hugh Road, Houston, Texas 77067.

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With over 3,800 acres of green space, Precinct 4 parks offer everything from sports fields to botanic gardens to hike-and-bike trails. Enjoy the outdoors today by finding a park near you at [www.hcp4.net/parks](http://www.hcp4.net/parks).

## What's Inside

**3**

Winter in Bloom

Jones Park Photo Contest Winner

**4**

Be Water Wise

**5**

Putting Your Garden to Work

First Friday Friends

**6**

Extending Our Reach

**7**

Extending Our Reach, cont'd.

**8**

Keeping Roadways Safe

Tribute to Veterans

SAP Calendar

**9**

Parks, Community Centers Calendar of Events

# Winter in Bloom

## CAMELLIAS ADD A POP OF COLOR TO WINTER LANDSCAPES

**T**his autumn, don't let the colors fade from your garden. Add vibrant reds, pinks, and corals with camellias, a hardy shrub that blooms October through March.

"Varieties of camellias bloom in autumn, winter, and early spring. With some upfront planning, your garden will have blooms all season long," says Suzzanne Chapman, volunteer coordinator at Mercer Botanic Gardens.

*Once established, camellias are fairly drought tolerant. Keep an eye out for tea scale, and prune when they are done blooming.*

Mercer's own gardens include more than 250 varieties of camellias, located in partially shaded areas throughout the park. At Mercer's Autumn Plant Sale, which will be held **September 26 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.** (early entrance for



**Congratulations to Corbin Adkins, who took home the Grand Prize in the 2015 Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center Photo Contest. Adkins won for his Jr. Wildlife entry of two gulf fritillary butterflies mating. This is the second year Adkins has entered the contest.**



Photo by Mercer staff

**Camellias are easy to grow and add color to winter gardens.**

members of The Mercer Society at 9:30 a.m.), shoppers can choose from over 20 different varieties of early, mid, and late bloomers.

According to volunteer Kitt Burnsidés, when it comes to planting camellias, the key is location, location, location. "Camellias do best in filtered light in well-drained soil that is slightly acidic," she says. The perfect spot is typically under the tall canopies of pine trees. "Pine trees not only break up the sun, but provide some acidity to the soil."

Once established, camellias are fairly drought tolerant. While they're getting established, however, make sure to provide them with adequate water. "We usually get enough rain during the winter here, but keep your eye on their water needs," Burnsidés says.

Another thing to keep an eye out for is tea scale, an insect that collects on the undersides of the foliage. "Tea scale looks like cotton underneath the leaves. It's easily kept under control with horticultural oil, which smothers the insect," she says.

The time to prune is when camellias are finished blooming. "Remove dead

branches and shape them how you like," Burnsidés says.

Blooms come in all different sizes—from the size of a boutonniere up to seven and a half inches wide. A few varieties available at the Autumn Plant Sale include:

- » 'Kramer's Supreme': Contrasted with glossy, dark green foliage, the peony-like, rosy-red blooms feature a delightful fragrance.
- » 'Pink Snow': One of the larger camellia varieties, 'Pink Snow' offers autumn blooms and can easily reach heights of over 10 feet if left untrimmed.
- » 'Little Pearl': Flowering in late March, buds are pale pink, opening to pure white blooms with pink edges.
- » 'Sparkling Burgundy': An all-time favorite, this variety produces fuchsia-pink-colored double blooms from autumn to mid-winter.

"With a little shade, camellias are easy to grow and they brighten up the winter landscape," Burnsidés concludes.

More info

[www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Mercer](http://www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Mercer)

# Be Water Wise

## CONSIDER CREATING A XERISCAPE GARDEN

**W**ant to reduce your water bill and do something good for the environment? Consider creating a xeriscape garden. Derived from the Greek word, xeric, meaning “dry,” xeriscaping is a technique that retrofits existing landscapes for low water usage.

This gardening practice is used extensively in the arid southwest and western regions of the U.S. and is becoming more widespread in traditionally wetter regions, such as along the Gulf Coast. “Water is a precious resource, particularly for gardeners,” says Darrin Duling, director of Mercer Botanic Gardens. “After the brutal heat and drought of 2010 and 2011 that killed so many trees and plants in our region, many

have looked for ways to create attractive gardens that use less water.” Duling says that a common misconception about xeric landscapes is that they must be composed of gravel beds with cacti, desert, and prairie scrub plants. “Nothing could be further from the truth,” he says. “A well-designed xeriscape can look lush and green, identical to a traditional heavily watered landscape.” Another misconception is that a xeriscape garden contains only native plants. “While native plants that require less water are certainly appropriate, there are lots of plants from all over the world that work very well in this scheme.”

Duling adds that creating a xeriscape garden doesn't mean you have to say goodbye to colorful, moisture-loving

*See Water Wise, page 7*



The *Tecoma x 'Bells of Fire'* makes a colorful addition to a xeriscape garden.

Photo by Mercer staff

*Cont'd. from Pioneer Day, cover page*

Hilton, who has been camping out the night before the event for 20 years. “You really start to understand what life was like back then. When visitors ask me what a pioneer woman can do with an apron, I can tell them because I've worn the dress and experienced the life.”

Volunteer Tom Whitesides says that even Commissioner R. Jack Cagle participates. “Commissioner Cagle loves history and has a true grasp on where we come from. He camps out the night before with his daughters and friends and participates in the living history demonstrations on the day of the event. He's game for most anything.”

### An Early Start

Volunteers and staff get an early start on the day of the event, arriving around 7 a.m. to begin setting up demonstrations, tending the campfires, and preparing food. “Without our volunteers, we would not have enough staff to run even a tenth of the activities we have going at Pioneer Day,” says Monte Parks, naturalist at Jones Park. Volunteers—who range in age from five or six to those in their 80s—cook, serve concessions, assist with parking and hayrides, and run demonstrations. “They

are essential to the experience,” he says.

Whitesides, who dresses the part of a soldier in the Texian militia, arrives early to set up his recruiting station, laying out wooden rifles for the kids he'll induct into the Redbud Hill Texian militia. “We sign up about 200 kids during the course of the day. We conduct a marching drill and teach them the purpose of these citizen soldiers, who not only protected the settlers from the threat of marauding Indians, but pitched in to save farms and buildings from fire and floods.”

At 2 p.m., Whitesides and other volunteers and staff re-enact a military skirmish, which oftentimes features a 19th-century canon. The long-time Civil War re-enactor truly enjoys this part of the day. “We try to do a different re-enactment each year. Last year, I played a tax collector in a confrontation about the role of government,” says Whitesides, who serves as president of Jesse Jones Park Volunteers, the park's nonprofit organization.

Mary Jo Chapman, who staffs the Settler Store for Pioneer Day, has also participated in the military skirmishes. “Last year, I played the wife of a pioneer in a Civil War re-enactment for Heritage Day. I've always been a history buff, and

I'm still a kid at heart, so I enjoy re-enacting.”

### Year-Round Preparations

While preparations for most begin a week before the event, Chapman works year-round to prepare for Pioneer Day and other park events. She, her 87-year-old mother-in-law, and other volunteers craft yarn dolls, wagon wheel dolls, and other period items for the Settler Store. “My mother-in-law and I make 50 to 60 dolls a year. They're very popular at living history events like Pioneer Day,” she says.

Chapman says she gained an appreciation for modern-day cooking after learning how to make hoe cakes and churn butter. “If it's too cold, it's difficult to get the milk and cream to churn into the butter. If it's too hot, you have nothing but melting butter.”

She says visitors give her energy throughout the long day. “The kids are so much fun. I share with them what life was like for pioneer children, and they get to see, hold, and experience the toys kids played with back then. They come away with a new experience, and it's exciting to be a part of that.”

More info

[www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Jones/Volunteers](http://www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Jones/Volunteers)

# Putting Your Garden to Work

## NATIVE PLANTS PROMOTE HEALTHY HABITATS

**B**eyond the beautiful blooms and colorful foliage, does your garden have a purpose? “Gardens can serve as habitats for wildlife, produce food for the table, and offer a natural way to screen out the street or an unsightly structure. Understanding your outdoor needs is

*In celebration of Texas Native Plant Week, come out to Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center on Saturday, October 17 at 1 p.m. Learn how native plants are essential for healthy ecosystems and create habitats for birds, small creatures, mammals, and other animals.*

the first step in planning and designing the perfect garden,” says Teri MacArthur, horticultural coordinator for Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center.

### FIRST FRIDAY FRIENDS AT JONES PARK

Senior adults who want to learn more about nature are invited to First Friday Friends at Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center. The new program for adults 55 years and up features leisurely nature walks (one-half mile or less), activities to do with grandchildren, and environmental issues of concern.

Upcoming programs, which are offered from 1 to 3 p.m. rain or shine, include:

- » September 4: Getting to Know Snakes
- » October 2: The Culture of Vultures
- » November 6: Native and Non-Native Local Trees

More information

281-446-8588

Once you know your garden’s purpose, take a look around the area. Is the sunlight direct, filtered, or shaded? Is the soil sandy, loamy, or clay? “Good healthy soil is critical to an abundant garden. Knowing what kind of soil you have helps determine which plants do best and what kinds of additions to the soil are needed to make it a more suitable environment for plant growth,” MacArthur says, adding that the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service ([agrilifeextension.tamu.edu](http://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu)) offers soil-testing services.

When it comes to plant selection, MacArthur advises to go native. “Local native plant species have survived on their own over the millennia. They are hardy, grow best in our soils, and require minimal maintenance, less water, and fewer chemicals to keep them healthy.”

MacArthur says that while native plant species can be found through AgriLife and local nurseries, one of the best places to buy is right in Precinct 4. “Plant sales throughout the year at Mercer Botanic Gardens offer many varieties of native plants,” she says.

For those looking to put their gardens to work in attracting and feeding pollinators, like bees and butterflies, MacArthur recommends the following natives:

- » Mistflower (*Eupatorium spp.*)
- » Sages (*Salvia spp.*)
- » Turk’s cap (*Malvaviscus drummondii*)
- » American beautyberry (*Callicarpa Americana*)
- » Indian blanket (*Gaillardia pulchella*)
- » Milkweed—attracts pollinators and Monarch butterflies! (*Asclepias spp.*)

Those wanting to create a butterfly friendly garden should visit the Native Plant Society of Texas at [www.npsot.org](http://www.npsot.org).



Photo by Tiffany Terry

**The Indian blanket is a hardy native plant that attracts pollinators.**

“The site offers a wealth of information about host and food plants for butterflies, as well as wildlife applications for other plants,” MacArthur says. Additionally, the site provides soil, sun, and watering requirements for thousands of plants included in their native library.

### Native Plant Resources

- » “How to Grow Native Plants” by Jill Nokes
- » “Gardening with Native Plants of the South” by Sally and Andy Wasowski
- » “Native Texas Plants” by Sally and Andy Wasowski
- » “A Garden Book for Houston and the Texas Gulf Coast” by the River Oaks Garden Club
- » Lazy Gardener newsletter, [www.lazygardenerandfriends.com](http://www.lazygardenerandfriends.com)
- » Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, [www.agrilifeextension.tamu.edu](http://www.agrilifeextension.tamu.edu)

More info

[www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Jones](http://www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Jones)

# Extending Our Reach

## VOLUNTEERS ENRICH PRECINCT 4 PROGRAMS

There's something going on every day in Precinct 4—from exercise, gardening, and craft classes to nature outings, luncheons, music, and other special events. How does Precinct 4 do it? With the help of more than a thousand volunteers.

"Volunteers are at the core of what we do in Precinct 4. They allow us to extend our reach in the community, making it possible to provide new and better programming, and to enhance the experience for residents who enjoy the various events offered by Precinct 4," says Commissioner R. Jack Cagle.

### Becoming Subject-Matter Experts

At Mercer Botanic Gardens and Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center, volunteers are involved in virtually every facet of the park experience. In the office or Nature Center, volunteers answer phones and greet visitors. Others record botanic and wildlife findings into a database, lead park tours, and re-enact important historical events. Many others work in the gardens and on the trails, cultivating plants and removing invasive plants, dead limbs, and old brush.

"Our Jesse Jones Park Volunteers assist in virtually every phase of the park's mission to connect people with nature and the pioneer history of Texas. They are our goodwill ambassadors," says Kaylen Fry, volunteer coordinator

for Jones Park. With just 13 full-time and two part-time staff members at Jones Park, volunteers play a key role in the park's most popular events, Pioneer Day and Heritage Day, which each host up to 2,000 visitors. "Volunteers are the backbone of our wildlife and living history tour programs, our five annual festivals, and our free Summer Nature Camp for kids," she says.

Fry says that volunteers at Jones Park range in age from small children to senior adults in their 80s. "Volunteering is often a family affair with several generations giving back to the park." She adds that at age 16, teens can join without a parent or guardian. "Service-learning students from Quest Early College High School serve as nature and living history docents, and many community service organizations increase our capacity for staging our five annual festivals."

Mercer Volunteer Coordinator Suzanne Chapman says that the park has benefited from companies seeking to provide more service opportunities for employees. "Mercer has more than 260 regular volunteers. With company groups and community service organizations, that number jumps to 500 or more." At March Mart, the park's largest event, ExxonMobil employees free up staff and volunteer gardeners by serving as ticket



Photo by Crystal Simmons

writers and cashiers. "They've been doing this for 35 years now. It allows us to be out in the gardens, visiting with the public and helping them find the right plants for their needs." Chapman mentions that Boy Scout troops have been especially devoted to trail management. "Removing wild ligustrum and Japanese honeysuckle, which crowd out native plants, is a big task. Student groups like the Boy Scouts, as well as company groups, help us keep these trails maintained."

At Mercer, volunteers have the opportunity to become subject-matter experts in the gardens. "We have volunteers who work in the greenhouses cultivating plants and who serve on plant committees. Others learn to plant and maintain the gardens. We train novice

*Extending Our Reach, cont'd. »*

## Current Volunteer Needs

### Facility/Park

Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center

Mercer Botanic Gardens

Senior Adult Program

Mangum-Howell

Big Stone Lodge at Dennis Johnston Park

### Volunteer Needs

Gardeners, docents for tours, living history demonstrators, event volunteers, and fundraisers for building campaign.

Gardeners, docents for school tours, and event volunteers. The Mercer Society: board members, committee members (various), and office/clerical assistants.

Event volunteers: Sunday Afternoon in the Park, Veteran's Day celebration, Breakfast with Santa.

Event volunteers: Santa's Workshop and SNAPP parties. Volunteers for front desk receptionist.

Instructors for classes (Sit and Be Fit), volunteers to distribute monthly calendars and special event flyers.

### More Information

281-446-8588

[www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Jones/Volunteers](http://www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Jones/Volunteers)

[www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org), [www.volunteerhouston.org](http://www.volunteerhouston.org), [www.themercersociety.org](http://www.themercersociety.org), 281-443-8731

281-893-3726

281-591-7830

281-350-1029



volunteers and in no time they are garden experts,” Chapman says.

### Leading Classes, Local Trips

Volunteers at Mangum-Howell Community Center not only assist with large community events like Santa’s Workshop, which attracts 1,700 visitors, but also serve as teachers for ongoing classes held at the center. “Volunteers lead yoga, Zumba, T’ai Chi, Sit and Be Fit, ceramic and craft classes, knitting and crochet, bridge, woodworking classes, and more,” says Diana Koon, director at Mangum-Howell. “With just five staff members, our volunteers make it possible to offer a whole host of free classes to Precinct 4 residents.”

Koon says that because the center fosters a family environment, volunteers have a sense of belonging and ownership. “Our volunteers are very proud of what they do at the center. They see firsthand the impact their contributions have on the community.”

According to Jan Sexton, director of the Senior Adult Program (SAP), volunteer trip coordinators keep senior adults, ages 50 and up, more active, enriching their lives. Monthly trips not only take senior adults to local destinations like the theater, museums, sporting events, and festivals, but also provide additional volunteer opportunities at Precinct 4 assisted-living facilities, the Star of Hope Mission, and the Houston Food Bank. “There is a whole new world of senior adults who are in good health and still personally productive. They want to accomplish goals, and they want to serve rather than be served,” Sexton says.

Volunteers assist with the monthly luncheons at Mangum-Howell and Big Stone Lodge at Dennis Johnston Park, as well as luncheons hosted at community partner sites in the Champions, Jersey Village, Lone Star College-University Park, and Oak Forest areas. Other opportunities include SAP’s quarterly dances, bridge tournaments, and other annual events. “We are able to provide more engaging events and reach more senior adults thanks to our volunteers,” Sexton says.

She adds that Sunday Afternoon in the Park, Precinct 4’s largest annual event, provides volunteer opportunities to assist with carnival games, face painting, children’s crafts, and many other family activities.

As with Mangum-Howell, volunteers at Big Stone Lodge teach, help in the kitchen and with luncheons, serve as translators, serve as trip coordinators and gardeners, and distribute monthly calendar events around Precinct 4. “Pilates, Zumba, line-dancing, jewelry beading, quilting, colored pencil drawing, and aerobics would just not be possible without our volunteers,” says Joanna Wilson, director at Big Stone Lodge.

She adds that volunteers are key to spreading the word about special events, programming, and needs at the center. “Our hummingbird and butterfly garden is kept beautiful because a volunteer saw the need and pitched in.”



Photo by Mercer staff

Sexton says that all hands and abilities are appreciated. “Young, middle, and senior adults are always needed. You can work as often or as little as you wish. Volunteers make our events successful.”

And, volunteers raise money for extended programming and amenities through nonprofit groups like The Mercer Society that give back to Precinct 4. Even the time spent volunteering can translate into money for Precinct 4. “Volunteers earn corporate grants by helping out at the park. That all goes back into programming and park enhancements and improvements,” Chapman says.

Although Precinct 4 has lots of helping hands, there’s always a need for more. Whether helping out at one of the parks, community centers, or for SAP, training is provided, and volunteers can choose where they want to work. “We want your experience to be a good one!” Chapman says.

“Everyone has something to offer. Volunteers enrich the lives of Precinct 4 residents. They make a difference in our community,” Sexton concludes.

*Cont’d. from Water Wise, page 4*

plants like begonias, impatiens, and calla lilies. “Placement is key. Plant them in low areas of the garden where water collects. You can still enjoy your favorites while conserving water,” he says. Successful xeriscape landscapes feature good mulching practices. “Mulching keeps roots cool while reducing transpiration, helping to retain soil moisture,” he says. The most common types of mulch are shredded bark and pine straw, which should be applied at least one to two inches deep. With gravel mulch, apply two to three inches deep since this type

of mulch is more porous. Duling says to exercise caution with boulders. “These are handsome features in a xeric landscape, but if they are in direct sunlight, they will absorb heat and radiate it all night. To avoid cooking your plants in the summer, plant a bit away from the boulders.”

Xeriscapes can include lawns as well. Though large sweeps of lawn may be attractive, they require massive amounts of water. Consider how much grass you need to play ball or host outdoor gatherings, and reduce lawn space wherever possible. “Redesign your landscape with lawn areas that set off your garden versus dominating it,” Duling says. And water that perfect

little patch of lawn with low-rise spray heads, avoiding broadcast and oscillating sprayers that evaporate or drift water away before it hits the ground. “Your water savings will be tremendous.” Duling adds that while low-water/no-mow prairie grass mixtures have been developed for other parts of the country, these mixes don’t do well in our challenging humid Gulf Coast regional climate. “We hope that as more people become water-savvy ‘xeriscapers,’ it will spur development of truly sustainable lawn options.”

More info

[www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Mercer](http://www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Mercer)

# Keeping Roadways Safe

ROAD & BRIDGE DEPARTMENT PLAYS KEY ROLE DURING, AFTER STORM EVENTS

**F**rom hurricane and heavy rain events to icy conditions, the Road & Bridge Department remains hard at work, ensuring that roadways are cleared and residents have access.

“Everyone here is on call 24 hours a day during an emergency event. While many are sleeping, we’re monitoring the weather and roadway conditions,” says Precinct 4’s Road & Bridge Department General Superintendent Bill Lee.

When flood waters began to rise the night of May 25, Lee already had staff members dispatched to install barricades and monitor water levels. “As soon as we receive confirmation that a storm has entered the Gulf Coast, staff goes into readiness mode, which involves checking inventory and preparing equipment. We’ll begin topping off all our fuel-dispensing tanks and equipment, filling



Photo by Crystal Simmons

up gas cans, and checking our inventory, as well as testing emergency generators.” In instances of icy roads, employees are out sanding the roads before and after ice storms or closing roads if they prove too hazardous.

As the streets filled with water on Memorial Day, Lee and his team monitored local media, Houston TranStar, and the Regional Joint Information Center for weather conditions and road closures throughout Precinct 4. Crews from Precinct 4’s three Road & Bridge camps also patrolled the area, reporting conditions of roadways, ditches, and creeks to minimize traffic accidents and improve safety. While the storm raged on, they worked to clear major thoroughfares and essential roadways for emergency management.

“We play a major role during natural disasters. Fire trucks, ambulances, and police rely on us to clear the roads,” Lee says. “Generally, when we receive rain in excess of two to three inches per hour, flooding can occur. Once water reaches a certain point, we know what areas will be impacted.” After a storm, there may be electrical wires down, trees in the road, and high water. Precinct 4 encourages residents to report downed trees and blocked roadways. “We want residents to call the Community Assistance Department so we can keep our area safe and clear.”

## SAP CALENDAR

**Luncheon: “Catfish on Wheels.”** *Fri., Sept. 4, 11:30 a.m.* Feast on all-you-can-eat fried catfish and shrimp. Suggested donation: \$12. Greenwood Forest Residents Club.\*

**“Sweet Deal” Party Bridge Tournament.** *Wed., Sept. 16, 9:45 a.m.* Recreational bridge players register in teams (\$24/team). Humble Civic Center.\*

**Luncheon: “Chili When It’s Chilly.”** *Tue., Oct. 13, 11:30 a.m.* Enjoy chili and beans. Suggested donation: \$10. Jersey Village Baptist Church.\*

**Sunday Afternoon in the Park.** *Sun., Oct. 18, noon-4 p.m.* Rain date: Sun., Oct. 25. Burroughs Park.

**Fall Dance.** *Wed., Oct. 28, 1-4 p.m.* Listen to the River Road Boys. Suggested donation: \$7. Humble Civic Center.\*

**Gobble ‘Til You Wobble Luncheon.** *Thu., Nov. 5, 11:30 a.m.* Enjoy turkey, dressing, and entertainment. Suggested donation: \$10. Shuttle service provided. Lone Star - University Park.\*

**“Sweet Deal” Party Bridge Tournament.** *Wed., Dec. 2, 9:45 a.m.* Recreational bridge players register in teams (\$24/team). Humble Civic Center.\*

**Christmas Luncheon: “I Can ‘Bearly’ Wait.”** *Fri., Dec. 4, 11:30 a.m.* Donate teddy bears and enjoy a catered meal and live entertainment. Suggested donation: \$10. Greenwood Forest Residents Club.\*

**Breakfast with Santa.** *Sat., Dec. 5, 9 a.m.* Tickets: \$7 (adults) and \$5 (children 12 and under). Klein ISD Multipurpose Center.\*

**Luncheon: “All Wrapped Up.”** *Tue., Dec. 8, 11:30 a.m.* Donate blankets to the needy and enjoy a catered meal and live entertainment. Suggested donation: \$10. Jersey Village Baptist Church.\*

\*Reservations required; call 281-893-3726.

## Tribute to Veterans Veteran’s Day Dinner, Concert

Commissioner R. Jack Cagle invites veterans to a tribute in their honor **Wednesday, November 11 at 6 p.m.** The Veteran’s Day dinner and concert, held at the Humble Civic Center, will feature a presentation of flags by Humble High School ROTC and a patriotic concert by the Houston Tidelanders Chorus, an all-male championship cappella, four-part harmony chorus that has warmed the hearts of audiences across Houston and the U.S. Following an address by Commissioner Cagle, participants will feast on a turkey dinner, complete with mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, a homemade roll, and dessert. The event is hosted by Precinct 4’s Senior Adult Program and Fun4Seniors. To make reservations, call 281-893-3726 or visit [www.hcp4.net/community/sap/events](http://www.hcp4.net/community/sap/events).

To request service

281-353-8424, [cadir@hcp4.net](mailto:cadir@hcp4.net)  
[www.readyharris.org](http://www.readyharris.org)

# Calendar of Events



## Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center



### SEPTEMBER

**TPWD Junior Angler Workshop.** *Sat., Sept. 5, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.* Youth learn the basics of fishing. Bring your own bait and tackle and catch a fish! Ages 8+. Reservations required beginning Wed., Aug. 26.\*

**Second Saturday Settlers: Spoon Making.** *Sat., Sept. 12, 1-3 p.m.* Learn about the art of spoon making, various woods, and techniques used by early settlers.



**Twilight Walk.** *Sat., Sept. 19, 7:30 p.m.* Discover frogs, owls, and other nocturnal wildlife. Bring a flashlight and wear closed-toe walking shoes. Ages 10+. Reservations required beginning Wed., Sept. 9.\*

**Bio-Blitz.** *Sat., Sept. 26, 7:30 a.m.-noon.* Identify and document birds, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates. Section leaders needed. Ages 10+. Reservations required beginning Wed., Sept. 16.\*

### OCTOBER

**Pontoon Boat Tours.** *Sat., Oct. 3, Tours throughout the day.* Take a leisurely tour along Spring Creek and learn about the area's natural history and wildlife. Ages 8+. Reservations required beginning Wed., Sept. 23.\*

**Science Teacher Workshop.** *Sat., Oct. 10, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.* This in-service workshop covers AP environmental science teaching standards and lesson plans. For formal and non-formal educators. Reservations required beginning Wed., Sept. 9. Email robert.hanchett.texas@gmail.com.\*

**Second Saturday Settlers: Lye Soap.** *Sat., Oct. 10, 1-3 p.m.* Learn how early Texas settlers made this old-fashioned, all-purpose cleaner.

**Stargazing.** *Sat., Oct. 10, 7:30 p.m.* The North Houston Astronomy Club teaches about planets, stars, and other celestial bodies. Bring a telescope or binoculars. Reservations required beginning Wed., Sept. 30.\*

**Plant Texas Natives!** *Sat., Oct. 17, 1 p.m.* See page 5 for details.

**Tricks and Treats Among the Trees.** *Sat., Oct. 24, 3:30-7 p.m.* Wear costumes, and trick-or-treat along the nature trail. Enjoy a hayride, crafts, and live critters.

**Canoe Spring Creek.** *Sat., Oct. 31, 9 a.m. or Sun., Nov. 1, 2 p.m.* On Saturday, enjoy a longer trip from upstream to Jones

Park. On Sunday, take a shorter trip from Jones Park to the San Jacinto River. Ages 16+. Reservations required beginning Wed., Oct. 21.\*

### NOVEMBER

**Sensational Spiders.** *Sat., Nov. 7, 10 a.m.* Meet a tarantula and learn about these and other pest-controlling arachnids.

**Pioneer Day.** *Sat., Nov. 14, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.* See cover page for details.

**Boy Scout Tree Planting Day.** *Sat., Nov. 21, 9 a.m.-noon.* Plant provided trees during this service day to help with reforestation. Bring tools. Reservations required beginning Wed., Nov. 11.\*

**Geocaching.** *Sat., Nov. 21, 1 p.m.* Bring a GPS unit or GPS-enabled smartphone to learn about this play-anywhere game with several courses for varying skill levels.

### DECEMBER

**An Old-Fashioned Christmas.** *Sat., Dec. 5, 4-7 p.m.* Enjoy music, a holiday craft, tree lighting, wassail and cookies, and an early visit from Saint Nicholas. Reservations required beginning Wed., Nov. 18 for Harris County residents; Mon., Nov. 23 for non-Harris County residents.\*

**Second Saturday Settlers: Homestead Holiday.** *Sat., Dec. 12, 1-3 p.m.* Experience the traditions of earlier times with cookies, wassail, and jolly old Saint Nicholas.

**Critter's Christmas.** *Sat., Dec. 19, 10 a.m.* Learn to make decorative edible treats for birds and other wildlife.

### JANUARY

**Winter Bird Count.** *Sat., Jan. 2, 7:45 a.m.* Join fellow birding enthusiasts for an informal count of wintering and resident birds. Birders ages 12+.

**Winter Woods Orienteering.** *Sat., Jan. 9, 10 a.m.-noon.* Bring a compass and learn to follow an off-trail course. Ages 10+. Reservations required beginning Wed., Dec. 30.\*

**Second Saturday Settlers: Flint to Fire.** *Sat., Jan. 9, 1-3 p.m.* Build a campfire with flint and steel.

**Pioneer Campfire.** *Sat., Jan. 9, 5:30 p.m.* Listen to acclaimed actress/storyteller Jean Donatto tell "This Train Is Bound for Story!" Reservations required beginning Wed., Dec. 30.\*

**Arbor Day Celebration.** *Sat. and Sun., Jan. 16 and 17, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.* Adopt a tree, take home a free sapling, and learn about planting and care. Webelos fulfill requirements for a Forester activity pin.



**Winter Tree ID Walk.** *Sat., Jan. 16, 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.* Learn to identify dormant trees using bark, twigs, and other characteristics.

\* Reservations required.  
Please call 281-446-8588.

All ages unless  
otherwise noted.

See Calendar, page 10

Continued from Calendar, page 9

**White Bass Fishing.** *Sat., Jan. 23, 8 a.m.-noon.* Bring tackle and bait for a morning of fishing with the whole family. Reservations required beginning Wed., Jan. 13.\*

**Flying WILD Workshop.** *Sat., Jan. 30, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.* Formal and non-formal educators take part in hands-on lessons, activities, and stewardship projects. Meets TEEAC & CEU requirements. Materials fee: \$20. Reservations required beginning Wed., Jan. 6.\*

UPCOMING

**Bicycle Scavenger Hunt.** *Sat., Feb. 6, 1-3 p.m.* Search for clues along the Spring Creek Greenway Trail while enjoying local wildlife. Ages 13 and under must be accompanied by an adult. Reservations required beginning Wed., Jan. 27.\*



**Homestead Heritage Day.** *Sat., Feb. 13, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.* Bring the family for a “living history” look at 19th-century Texas settler life.

**Who Ate that Tree?** *Sat., Feb. 20, 10 a.m.* Learn about local mushrooms and their role in ecology.

**Adopt-a-Trail!** *Sat., Feb. 27, 9 a.m.-noon.* Celebrate National Invasive Species Awareness Week ([www.nisaw.org](http://www.nisaw.org)) by removing invasive plants. Ages 10+. Reservations required beginning Wed., Feb. 17.\*

**NatureFest.** *Sat., March 5, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.* Speakers discuss birds, native plants, and nature photography. The day includes guided nature walks, pontoon boat tours, live animals, and nature-related educational booths.

**Spring Breakout.** *Mon.-Fri., March 14-18.* Reservations required beginning Wed., March 2.\*

Mercer Botanic Gardens



SEPTEMBER

**Lunch Bunch: Tree Care - What Every Tree Owner Should Know.** *Wed., Sept. 9, noon-2 p.m.* Learn about tree care, such as pruning, mulching, tree barriers, and pre-landscape renovation considerations.\*

**Cypress Creek Regatta.** *Sat., Sept. 19.* Paddle along Cypress Creek during the Bayou Preservation Association’s 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Cypress Creek Regatta. Visit [www.cypresscreekregatta.org](http://www.cypresscreekregatta.org) to register.\*

**Autumn Plant Sale and Market.** *Sat., Sept. 26. TMS Members: 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. General public: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.* See page 3 for details.

**Texas Gulf Coast Gardener, Tier I: Intro to Gardening.** *Tuesdays, Sept. 22-Nov. 17, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.* Learn gardening essentials for the Texas Gulf Coast.\*

**Texas Gulf Coast Gardener, Tier II: Outstanding Landscape Plants.** *Thursdays, Sept. 24-Nov. 19, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.* Become knowledgeable in horticulture, propagation, and botany.\*



OCTOBER

**Lunch Bunch: Beyond Curb Appeal - The Restorative Effect of Nature.** *Wed., Oct. 14, noon-2 p.m.* Learn about the health benefits of nature from MD Anderson’s David Renninger and how the exterior environment should be considered part of our public health infrastructure.\*

**Moonlight Over Mercer: Dine, Dance, and Donate.** *Saturday, Oct. 17, 5 p.m.* Dine under the stars and bid on unique and extraordinary treasures during silent and live auctions. Enjoy savory appetizers, a gourmet cocktail buffet, and complimentary wine and beer. Proceeds benefit special garden projects and programs at Mercer. For business sponsorship information, to donate auction items and services, or to purchase individual tickets or tables, contact The Mercer Society at 713-274-7160 or [msociety@hcp4.net](mailto:msociety@hcp4.net).\*

NOVEMBER

**Docent Training: So You Want to Be a Children’s Docent?** *Mon., Nov. 2, 9 a.m.-noon.* Learn how to introduce children to the beauty and wonder of plants and animals. Training includes interactive activities, a garden tour designed for lower elementary school children, and tips for interacting with children. Previous teaching experience not required.\*

**Docent Training: Garden Docents Make Mercer Memorable.** *Mon., Nov. 9, 9 a.m.-noon.* Make a visit to Mercer Botanic Gardens memorable for visitors by becoming a garden docent! Training includes a garden tour, interactive activities, and tips for interacting with adults, senior adults, and families.\*

**Lunch Bunch: Fire Ants and Crazy Ants.** *Wed., Nov. 11, noon-2 p.m.* Dr. Paul Nester, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension program specialist, will share information about fire ants, tawny crazy ants, and methods for ant control.\*

DECEMBER

**Lunch Bunch: Christmas Crafts Using Natural Materials.** *Wed., Dec. 9, noon-2 p.m.* Enjoy a festive time crafting take-home ornaments and decorations to liven your house this holiday season.\*

**Christmas Bird Count.** *Sat., Dec. 19, 8 a.m.* Meet at the west-side parking lot for the Spring Creek Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Census information will be gathered and submitted to the National Audubon Society, along with counts from around the world. For more information or to attend, email [albarr@comcast.net](mailto:albarr@comcast.net).

\* Reservations required. Please call 713-274-7160.

All ages unless otherwise noted.

See Calendar, page 11

Continued from Calendar, page 10

JANUARY

**Lunch Bunch: Top Bar Beehives.** *Wed., Jan. 13, noon-2 p.m.* Dean “the beekeeper” Cook will present a general overview of beekeeping and top bar beehives.

**Texas Gulf Coast Gardener, Tier III: The Art of Landscape Design.** *Mondays, Jan. 25-Feb. 29, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.* Learn how to build a perfect backyard oasis. Presentations followed by practice analysis and landscape design.\*

UPCOMING

**Lunch Bunch: Spring into Your Lawn – Organic Lawn Care and Springtime Prep.** *Wed., Feb. 10, noon-2 p.m.* Bob Dailey shares organic lawn care techniques and offers details to prepare your lawn for spring.\*

**March Mart Volunteer Training.** *Wed., March 9, 10:30-11:30 a.m. and Sat., March 12, 9:30-10:30 a.m.* New and experienced volunteers learn about the March Mart process and what to expect at the event.

**March Mart Preview.** *Wed., March 9, noon-2 p.m. and Sat., March 12, 10:30 a.m.-noon.* This annual presentation will whet your gardening appetite for the biggest and best plant sale in the Gulf Coast region.\*

**March Mart.** *Fri. and Sat., March 18 and 19, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.* One of the Texas Gulf Coast region’s largest and most anticipated horticultural events, this plant sale features high-quality plants rarely found at local retail nurseries.

## Community Centers



BIG STONE LODGE AT DENNIS JOHNSTON PARK

\*For more information or to sign up, call 281-350-1029.

**Popcorn and a Movie.** *Wednesdays, 1 p.m.* Invite friends and family for a free movie and popcorn.

- Sept. 2 “That Old Feeling”
- Oct. 7 “Rear Window”
- Nov. 4 “Move over Darling”
- Dec. 2 “Calendar Girls”
- Jan. 6 “A Walk in the Clouds”
- Feb. 3 “March of the Penguins”

**Luncheon: “Homecoming Hurrah.”** *Fri., Sept. 18, 11:30 a.m.* Celebrate two years at Big Stone Lodge with chicken-fried steak. Tickets: \$8. Purchase tickets by Wed., Sept. 16.\*

**Luncheon: “Reel It In.”** *Fri., Oct. 16, 11:30 a.m.* Enjoy all-you-can-eat fried catfish and shrimp. Tickets: \$12. Purchase tickets by Wed., Oct. 14.\*

**“Hands Down” Party Bridge Tournament.** *Fri., Nov. 6, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.* Recreational bridge players register in teams (\$24/team) beginning Mon., July 27.\*

**Luncheon: “Thanksgiving Blessings.”** *Fri., Nov. 20, 11:30 a.m.* Enjoy a traditional turkey and dressing meal. Suggested donation: \$9. Purchase tickets by Wed., Nov. 18.\*

**Holiday Luncheon: “Silver Bells Jing-a-Ling.”** *Fri., Dec. 18, 11:30 a.m.* Gather with friends and family for a delightful pork loin holiday meal. Suggested donation: \$9. Purchase tickets by Wed., Dec. 16.\*

**Luncheon: “Lei’d Back.”** *Fri., Jan. 15, 11:30 a.m.* Enjoy a warm island pineapple grilled chicken meal. Suggested donation: \$8. Purchase tickets by Wed., Jan. 13.\*

**“Hands Down” Party Bridge Tournament.** *Fri., Jan. 29, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.* Recreational bridge players register in teams (\$24/team) beginning Mon., Nov. 9.\*

**Luncheon: “Lunar New Year.”** *Fri., Feb. 19, 11:30 a.m.* Celebrate the Year of the Monkey and feast on teriyaki chicken and eggrolls. Suggested donation: \$8. Purchase tickets by Wed., Feb. 17.\*

MANGUM - HOWELL CENTER

\*For more information or to sign up, call 281-591-7830.

**Luncheon: “That’s Italian.”** *Tue., Sept. 8, noon.* Enjoy a meal and entertainment. Tickets: \$8. Purchase tickets by Fri., Sept. 4.\*

**Fall Festival “FUN”draiser.** *Fri., Sept. 25, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.* Take part in silent and live auctions and a hamburger lunch. Lunch tickets: \$7. Take-out containers available. Raffle tickets: \$1 each or six for \$5. Donate a dessert and new items for the silent auction.

**“All Trumped Up” Bridge Tournament.** *Thu., Oct. 1, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.* Recreational bridge players register in teams (\$24/team) beginning Thu., Aug. 6.\*

**Luncheon: “Jazzy Jack O’Lantern.”** *Tue., Oct. 13, noon.* Enjoy a meal and entertainment. Tickets: \$8. Purchase tickets by Fri., Oct. 9.\*

**Thanksgiving Luncheon: “Thankful Hearts.”** *Tue., Nov. 17, noon.* Feast on a traditional turkey meal. Tickets: \$8. Purchase tickets by Fri., Nov. 13.\*

**Christmas Luncheon: “Silver Bells.”** *Tue., Dec. 15, noon.* Celebrate the holiday with a traditional turkey meal. Tickets: \$8. Purchase tickets by Fri., Dec. 11.\*

**Santa’s Workshop.** *Fri. and Sat., Dec. 4 and 5, and Fri. Dec. 11, 6-8:30 p.m.* Enjoy holiday sights, sounds, and delights with crafts, games, a hayride, refreshments, and a visit from Santa. Bring a camera!

**Luncheon: “Kick Off.”** *Tue., Jan. 12, noon.* Enjoy a meal and entertainment. Tickets: \$8. Purchase tickets by Fri., Jan. 9.\*

**“All Trumped Up” Bridge Tournament.** *Thu., Feb. 4, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.* Recreational bridge players register in teams (\$24/team) beginning Thu., Oct. 1.\*

**Luncheon: “Black History Awareness.”** *Tue., Feb. 9, noon.* Bring your favorite “soul food” with enough to share. Suggested donation: \$5.\*

**Harris County Precinct 4**  
R. Jack Cagle, Commissioner  
1731 Hugh Road  
Houston, Texas 77067

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# Moonlight OVER Mercer

A ROMANTIC EVENING GALA

*Saturday, October 17*

- ✦ FINE DINING
- ✦ MUSIC
- ✦ DANCING
- ✦ SILENT AND LIVE AUCTIONS

## What's Inside

**4** Create a Xeriscape Garden

**6** Volunteer Needs in Precinct 4

**8** Road & Bridge on the Ready

# UPDATE

