



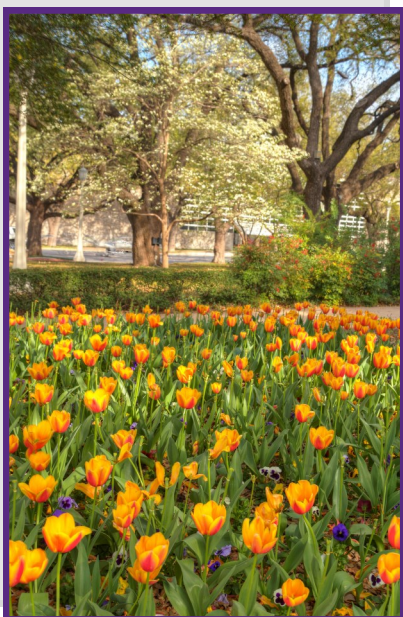
Volume 3, Issue 6  
April 2019  
The Great Outdoors

## Spring, At Last!

photos by Polly Hooper

Our beautiful TCU campus has sprung to life with an abundance of glorious tulips — carefully hidden underground last fall — to welcome the new season.

Treat yourself to a stroll around the area and you'll be glad you did! And if you're going on the TCU Campus Walking Tour, be sure to bring your camera...when the tulips are gone, something else is sure to bloom.



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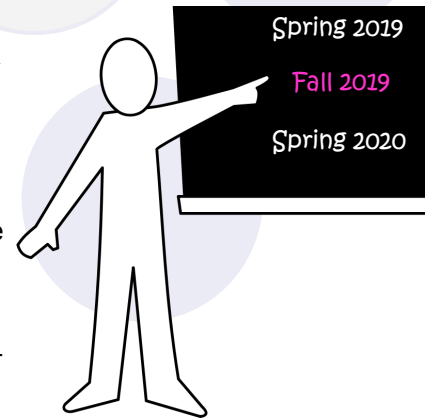


## Fall 2019 is Looking Great by Randy Smith

The Silver Frogs Curriculum Committee has closed the Fall 2019 class proposal period with 122 potential courses / lectures submitted, comprised of 63 four-week courses and 59 one-time lectures. The committee will be reviewing all submittals soon and choosing which to offer in the fall. We may not be able to schedule all due to facility limitations, instructor availability, and other factors. Instructors will be notified if their proposal can't be offered this next semester. All scheduled instructors will be notified of their date, time, and location as soon as the committee completes the detailed class schedule.

Thanks to all instructors who submitted a proposal. We have many of our favorites returning plus many new and interesting topics offered for the first time. High-quality classes are the core of the Silver Frogs program, and we work hard to recruit a wide selection of topics to cover our members' interests. We have quite a few first-time Silver Frogs instructors — which is exciting — and many non-members volunteering to come share their time and knowledge with us.

The committee will be wrapping up the Fall '19 schedule and catalog within the next several weeks, but we are already thinking about Spring 2020. If you have ever thought about sharing your experiences, hobbies, and vast knowledge of ( fill in the blank ), please consider offering a course and/or lecture in 2020. Don't be afraid to step out and give it a try — it's fun to share what you know, and you don't need to have been an educator in a past life. 🐸



## End of Semester Celebration



[Member  
Registration](#)

There are still a few seats left for the end of semester celebration at Joe T Garcia's on Wednesday, May 22 from 6:00-8:30pm. Registration, which is REQUIRED, is due by Wednesday, May 8th (but the event may sell out by then, so don't delay). Limited guest registration (one per Silver Frog) is available for \$31. **Attendees must present their admission confirmation or be listed on the roster for admission — no exceptions!!** Register online or call TCU Extended Education at 817-257-7132.

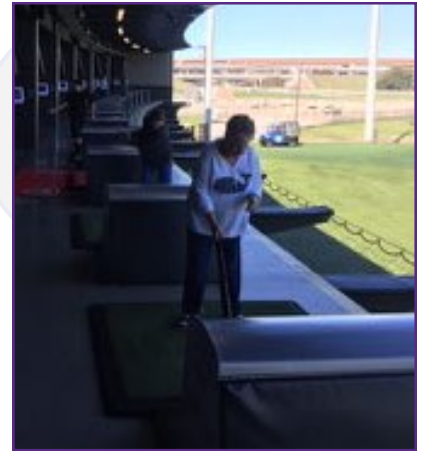
We will be outdoors on the patio if the weather cooperates (inside if it doesn't). Your \$10 registration fee provides you with one free drink ticket (margarita, beer, wine or soft drink). Want more drinks? Bring your cash (that's what Joe T's accepts)!

6-6:30pm	Appetizers & Bar (one included drink ticket)
6:30pm	Combo Enchilada / Fajita Dinner and Dessert
7:15pm	Thank-Yous, Recognition, and Door Prizes

**Silver Frogs: Don't forget about the Donation Bin, located in the back of our Secrest-Wible classroom! Bring your travel-sized toiletries in a zip-top bag and they'll be donated to local charities in our community.**

## Topgolfers Swing into Spring by Lisa Winter

Topgolf, on Wednesday, March 13, was lots of fun and went off without a hitch, following a night of high winds, lightning, thunder, and heavy rain. Topgolf is a rain-or-shine venue, but it didn't matter because by 10:00am the sun was out and skies were clear. Come next time for the food and the company if not the golf, (but the golf is "no pressure" and just for fun, although SOME people had to keep score. You know who you are!).



## Women and Wine SIG Tastes Texas photos by Randy Smith

On March 28, The Women and Wine special interest group met at the home of Andi Smith to taste and learn about Texas wines and enjoy each other's company. As you can see in these pictures, there was a great turnout and some good wines and food were enjoyed by all who attended.





## Silver Frogs Tour the BRIT by Lisa Winter

Silver Frogs toured the [Botanical Research Institute of Texas \(BRIT\)](#) on April 11. We took a tour of their 70,000-square-foot home in the Fort Worth Cultural District, one of only eight buildings in Texas to earn platinum certification in the US Green Building Council's LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System™. The building itself was fascinating, with its solar panels, living roof, water collection, and bioswales to prevent localized flooding. After driving past it since its construction in 2011, it was amazing to see this beautiful facility from the inside.

We talked with the researchers who collect plant samples from the field and process them by drying, identifying, classifying, and labeling them. We saw the library of those collected plants, including microscopically-enhanced pictures of pollens (especially interesting this week with all of our allergy woes). We visited the children's library, where they hold botany classes starting with children as young as preschoolers. Lastly, we were admitted to the rare books collection, where we could "look but don't touch." The staff was very knowledgeable and led highly interactive instructional tours for our group.

For more information about the green building and campus, [click here](#).



## Cheers!

THANK YOU! Recently I lost a very important (to me) ring. There is some monetary value but, more importantly, it had great sentimental value since it belonged to my mother, who passed away three years ago, and was to be handed down to my granddaughter. It was the very cold day in March, and I felt certain it was in the Secrest-Wible building where I had a class that morning. I searched my car, my house, and the parking lot near the building, extensively, but no ring. I checked with those at the desk in the building and they searched and asked all of the people who worked there but still no ring.

Someone suggested I try the police department and — miraculously — it had been turned in. I don't know for sure that a Silver Frog turned it in, but I suspect it may have been since it was in the classroom building and the parking lot across the street. I would like to thank you in person if you would give me a call. It was very meaningful to me, far more than the monetary value, but it was valuable enough that it could have been pawned, sold, or just kept for personal wear. I cannot begin to thank the person who turned it in enough!

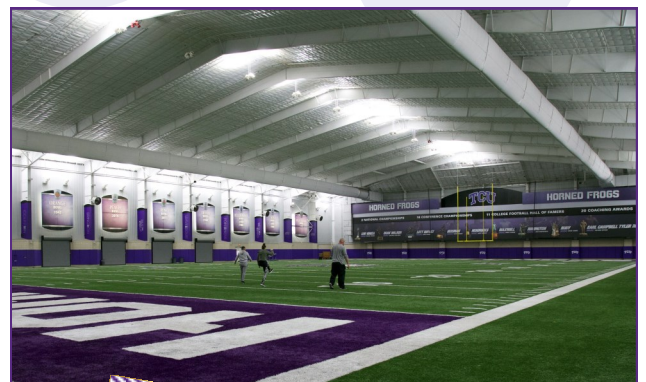
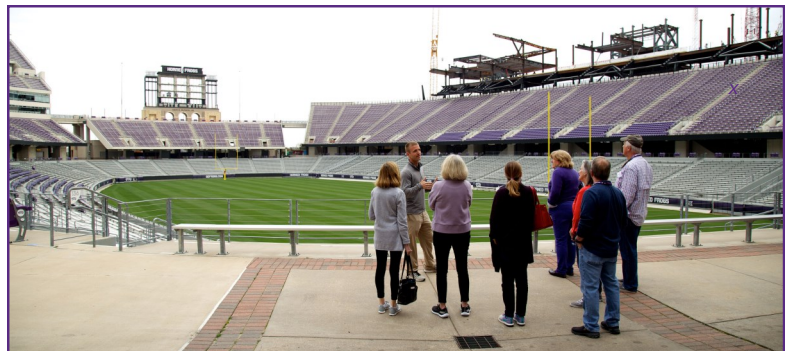
-- Jo Ann Haedge



## Inside TCU's Athletics Facilities by Polly Hooper



A group of lucky Silver Frogs toured the TCU Athletic Complex on the first day of Spring. We had wonderful tour guides who took us into some of the places we all agreed we would never see otherwise. We saw the most plush suites, The Champions Club, the Press Box, and where the athletes dine, as well as the practice facilities for football, soccer, and basketball. TCU has a beautiful, expansive facility that is quite impressive. I encourage anyone who has the opportunity to take this tour to sign up immediately when it is offered again. 🐸





## Luncheon Lecture: Dan Calvin by Sharon Harrelson



Silver Frogs were treated to lunch and a movie on March 22 when popular film enthusiast and instructor Dan Calvin took the microphone and walked us through the 1942 classic **Casablanca**, winner of the Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Adapted Screenplay, and often at the top of “best films of all time” lists.

Armed with box lunches and a common interest in this Hollywood favorite, a sold-out crowd of 300 enjoyed clips from the film along with Dan’s commentary and little-known factoids about its production, historical context and the people who made it.



Directed by Michael Curtiz and based on the unproduced stage play *Everybody Comes to Rick's*, the story of three little people in a crazy world includes a pseudo-documentary opening, melodrama, irony, and dramatic music. This film about World War II was filmed as that war was happening, making the story and characters all the more captivating.

The next (and final) luncheon lecture for this semester will be on **Friday, May 17**. Mark your calendar, and then keep an eye on your email for details and the registration link.



## The Great Silver Frog Cookie Challenge



Inspired by the Silver Frog *Baker's Dozen: Cookies* class, **The Great Silver Frog Cookie Challenge will take place on Tuesday, April 23 from 1:00-2:30pm in the Dee J. Kelly Alumni & Visitors Center**. Silver Frogs will battle for Best Bar Cookie and Best Drop/Rolled/Shaped Cookie as selected by celebrity judges. Silver Frogs will decide the People's Choice winner. Yes, there will be prizes!!

**Are YOU up for the challenge?** Entry Requirements:

- ▷ Homemade cookies only, either bar or drop/rolled/shaped
- ▷ Provide four dozen cookies and two copies of your recipe by noon on April 23
- ▷ You can submit one entry in either or both categories
- ▷ Baker must be a current Silver Frog

**BAKERS:** [Register Here to Accept the Challenge](#)

**Not a Baker?** [Register Here to Attend, Eat Cookies, and Vote](#)

*Iced beverages will be provided! Join us for this fun, free event!*

**Extended!** Entry Deadline is Wednesday, April 17



## We've Got Class! scenes from the spring semester

Shout out to a fun class: ***The 1960s Folk Music Revival in 4 Acts*** class was taught by a very passionate instructor, Michael Erwine. He took us through folk music from its grass-roots up to the 1960s. Many songs were passed down through time to the next big name in folk music, with that musician adding his or her twist. We sang along with our favorite tunes when the instructor played snippets. He also found videos on YouTube so we could see variety show outtakes of live acts! I highly recommend this class!

— Lisa Winter



A group of crafty Silver Frogs learned ***Wreath Making*** with deco mesh ribbon in this four-week course, as well as different techniques and materials for making beautiful bows. We had a great time and made some wonderful Spring and Easter decor for our homes.

— Polly Hooper

Lecture on ***General Wolters, Commander of the Texas National Guard in the 20s***, by James Godfrey. Sounded esoteric and it is. But what a great Texas history lesson you get from learning about the six times the Guard enforced full martial law in Texas under his command, as declared by various governors. Great windows were opened into little-known events involving everything from race riots to outlaw oil field operators, open defiance of prohibition, gambling and prostitution laws, social and criminal injustices, mob actions, burning of a courthouse and more! Highly recommended. As James says, "Stuff not often taught in 7th grade Texas history class."

— Tom Clark



Dr. Anne Bailey presented an outstanding lecture on ***Texans in the Civil War***.

— Richard Ranc

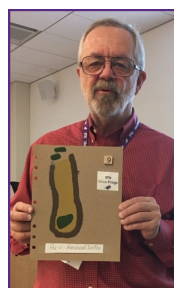
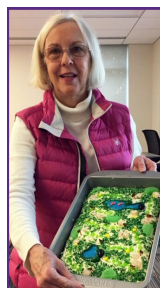


The ***Baker's Dozen: Cookies*** class was such fun! I learned far more than I thought could be presented in such a course! Our instructor Sharon Harrelson did a wonderful job presenting a wide range of content from choosing a cookie sheet to packaging cookies for mailing. She also shared samples of the types of cookies we discussed each week. Looking forward to her fall Christmas/holiday cookie class. Thank you, Sharon!

— Connie Lowry

These are pictures from my class, ***Never Too Late To Begin Again***. This class is about creativity. The students had a project to design a golf course, and they came up with wonderful, creative ideas. It was so much fun.

— Cathy Sunkel





## Instructor Spotlight: Bill Taylor by Carolyn Stephens

**"If you've never experienced the joy of accomplishing more than you can imagine, plant a garden" ... (Robert Brault)**

... but be cautious, because there may be more in your landscape than grass, shrubs, bulbs, and seeds.

In his lecture in February on what outdoor dangers we may encounter in the North Central Texas area, William (Bill) Taylor cautioned would-be gardeners and outdoor enthusiasts to realize what dangerous animals are sharing our living spaces.

"Animals are like the 'human animal' in that they need three elements to survive – food, water, and shelter," Taylor said. We often create this environment in our landscape, and we almost certainly experience it while camping and hiking. "Animals also need a food chain or, in a more diverse nature, a food web," he explained.

Taylor is an amateur herpetologist and field biologist with degrees in biology and chemistry. He has maintained his active participation in wild-life biology and conservation since 1957 and has been a popular lecturer for Silver Frogs. He was happy to share some helpful outdoor information for all Silver Frogs.



*There may be dangerous creatures in your lecture as well as in your landscape!*

### Taylor's Safety Tips for Gardeners & Outdoor Enthusiasts

**He urges those who step out into our natural environment to abide by general safety rules, including:**

- Wear a long-sleeved shirt.
- Wear leather or heavy rubber shoes or boots that cover the entire foot, ankle and mid-calf areas.
- When gardening, wear leather gloves.
- If tending an area with high grass, use a pole to push the grass aside so you can see the ground on either side and ahead of you.
- All animals may be encountered 24/7 throughout the year depending on the temperature.

**What to know about venomous snakes:**

- *Copperhead snakes* are abundant in our area and are adept climbers – watch above as well as on the ground.
- *Cottonmouth snakes*, also abundant in our area, can be found in water and along shoreline and brush areas. They do venture away from the semiaquatic environment.



- *Coral snakes* are normally nocturnal, but can also be active during twilight hours.
- A variety of venomous *rattlesnakes* live in Texas with the Western Diamondback and Mississauga most prevalent in Tarrant County, the Timber and Pigmy in Dallas County.

- Normally, reptiles are active at 68-104°F and will most likely be found on the southern and western exposures when there is ample sunlight. This includes our yards, lake and river embankments, brush piles, etc.

**And about bugs:**

- Use insect repellent!!!!!!
- Make an effort to avoid bees, beneficial natural pollinators, and don't attract wasps by keeping hummingbird feeders clean of sugary substances.
- Beware of Asps – larva of the Puss Moth – because their fur-like surface is able to inject a painful venom.



Many of us live in what Taylor calls "urban wilderness," meaning we should expect wild and feral animals in our yards. Some may require intervention by Animal Control. Putting out feed for birds, deer and feral cats can attract other animals that feed on them like coyotes, bobcats, etc.

He adds that we should treat all wild animals as WILD ANIMALS. It is their nature to defend their space for themselves and for their offspring.

For more information, Taylor recommends the [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's](http://www.texaswildlifedepartment.com) website.





## Tomato Time by Nancy Ranc

Here it is again, the best time of the year for any gardener. The daffodils, tulips, redbuds, and bluebonnets have been putting on a terrific show. Now it is finally safe to start tomatoes and other summer vegetables.

After years of growing few, if any, [\\$64 tomatoes](#), I was lucky to associate with a group of exceptional gardeners. We volunteered together at a community garden where we consistently donated 100 or more pounds of tomatoes every week of the growing season. In addition, we successfully produced cucumbers, peppers, eggplants, onions, and herbs.

These generous gardeners were happy to share their formula for producing large, abundant, and delicious tomatoes. Following their recommendations, last year we planted four tomato vines that grew to six feet tall! We had enough large tomatoes, up to one pound each, to satisfy our family and neighbors. We did this in a six-by-eight-foot raised garden bed where we produced lettuce, spinach, cilantro, snap peas and cucumbers in addition to tomatoes.

We built our garden bed in a very sunny spot in the yard and filled it with rich garden soil and compost. Then we installed hoops made from PVC to support row cover in case of a frost. Because of easy access to water, we decided against installing any irrigation; but if you have to drag a hose a long distance, an irrigation system is very helpful. Be sure to use very large, strong tomato cages and install them at the time of planting.



Our tomato plants — Celebrity and Beefsteak — came from a big box store early in the season, so we had to run them in and out until time to plant but this way we had a good selection from which to choose. Then, based on directions from the community garden volunteers, we planted our crop.

Directions:

- ➊ First, **remove all but the top three sets of leaves** on the tomato plants.
- ➋ **Dig a hole** as deep as the tomato plant plus a few inches for the products you add to the hole. You will need to plant the tomato so only the three sets of leaves are out of the ground to support the eventual size of the plant.
- ➌ Add 1-2 shovels of **compost**, half a cup of **cottonseed meal** (nitrogen for the plant), half a cup of **agricultural molasses** (sugar for soil micro-organisms), half a cup of **cornmeal** (natural fungicide) and 1 tablespoon **dolomite** to the hole and mix it in well.
- ➍ Add 1 teaspoon each of **mycorrhizal fungi** and **bone meal** to the hole. Don't mix. Remove the plant from the container and place it in the hole.
- ➎ Backfill with soil about halfway and water in with **fish emulsion or Sea Tea**, following the label instructions.
- ➏ After filling the hole completely, sprinkle 1 tablespoon **Epsom salt** around the perimeter of the plant (at least five inches from stem). Don't allow the salt to contact the plant.
- ➐ **Water** in again. Don't get too carried away with the water — too much can kill tomato seedlings. Water with fish emulsion or Sea Tea mixed with water in two weeks and then every 2-4 weeks throughout the season.

You can expect abundant, large tomatoes in the time described on the plant tag that comes with your seedling.

Your neighbors will love you. Happy gardening!





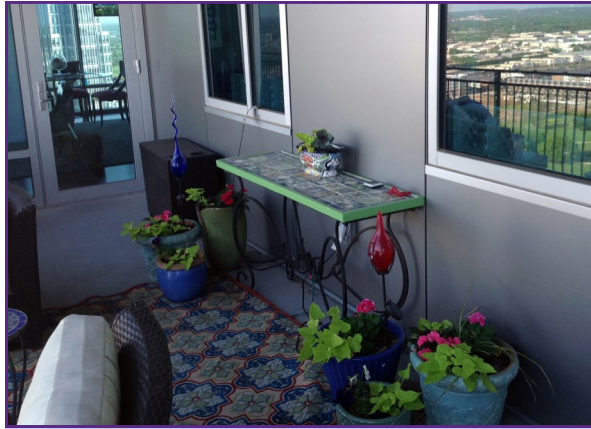


## What We're Growing



We planted a beautiful redbud on the first day of spring. It's a joy to behold.

— Linda Rodjak



I don't have a 'traditional' garden...but I have pretty pots on my balcony with a 'view' — Carol Stanford

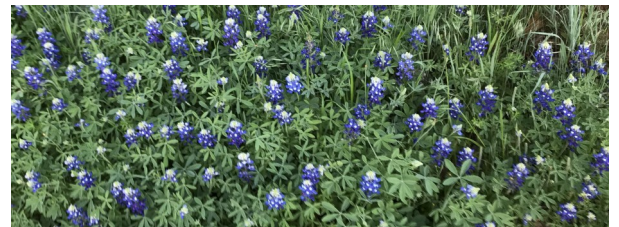


First iris of the season!

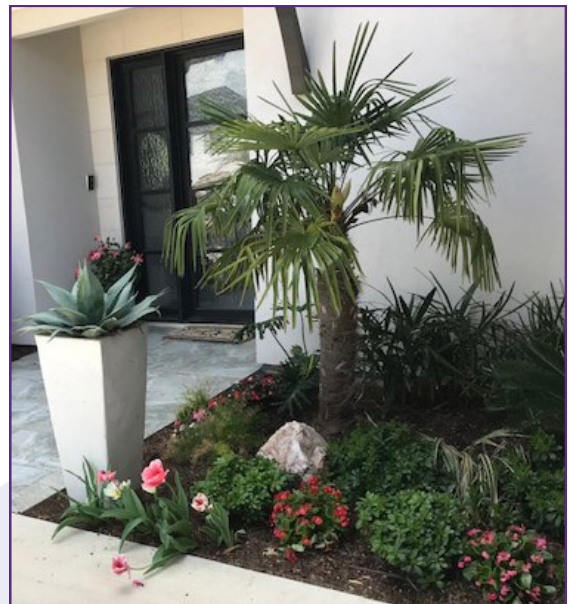
— Sharon Harrelson



"Before" (2017) and "After" (2019) pictures of our back yard  
— Nancy and Richard Ranc



Bluebonnets on my morning walk — Richard Ranc



Tulips, begonias, palms, lily, asparagus ferns, and evergreens!

— Bob Whittaker



## Build Your Own Water Feature by Richard Ranc

Water features add a softness and coolness to Texas gardens. Fountains and waterfalls can be purchased at numerous shops, generally, in the \$200-\$300 range. Most are manufactured of fiber-glass. Many are designed to sit flat against a wall to hide wires and access panels. A free standing feature is what you may want. Roundness and ceramic are natural shapes and materials. So, why not build your own water feature out of ceramic pots?

Materials needed (project cost was just over \$200):

- Three ceramic pots; 24", 18" and 12" round. Pots can be patterned or solid. I prefer a single pattern or color for all pots. (about \$150, depending on choice of pots)
- River stones (\$15)
- Five gallon pail, dark color (\$5)
- Small electric pump to lift water 3-5 feet (\$30)
- 1/2" diameter plastic pipe 2' to connect pump (\$2)
- Spray or paint-on seal (\$5)
- Tools: drill, level
- Around the house: cork, bricks

**Select a spot for your fountain.** Near a patio is ideal. It can be seen and heard and is generally near an electrical outlet.

Use a rubber spray to **waterproof the inside of the pots** and a cork (wine corks do nicely) to seal the hole in the bottom of the largest pot

**Dig out a concave hole**, setting the largest pot in the dug out portion and level 2-3 inches below the surface. Leveling this "base" pot is essential!

**Drill holes in the bottom of the bucket.** It will serve as the stand for your next size pot and will also house your fountain pump. Invert the bucket over the pump, placing it in the largest pot.

Now **set the middle pot on the bucket**, running the pipe from the pump through the hole in that pot

**Place two pavers or bricks in the middle pot** to stabilize the top pot.

Now **place the smallest pot on the bricks** with the water pipe extending through the top pot

**Be sure all pots are level.**

**Arrange rocks** in larger pot, to hide the bucket. Then arrange river rocks to hide bricks and stabilize fountain. Run your electrical cord over the edge of the bottom pot hiding it with plantings.

**Fill** bottom pot full of water. **Connect** pump. Arrange pipe and rocks to produce pleasing sound.





## How Do You Feel About Outdoor Reading? by Shari Barnes



The great outdoors is a mixed blessing. Even the idea of communing with nature relieves stress and anxiety, and actually hitting the walking trail makes me feel oh-so noble. Breathing fresh air while working off those calories from the breakfast cinnamon rolls has got to be good for you!

But the real truth is that I'm not much of an outdoors gal. My idea of camping is a motel without a breakfast buffet. My childhood memories of camping are dominated by huge mosquitoes, and my most recent encounter was with a copperhead snake draped over my picnic table. (Well, he was dead, but that didn't make him any prettier.) As for outdoor sports, my best encounter included an unsuccessful tennis match complete with broken foot.

Reading about the outdoors is something I can do and enjoy. One of my favorites is Bill Bryson's **A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail** (1997). Author of at least ten books, Bryson conveys history and ecology that makes you smile. He is adept at introducing his readers to interesting people and critters. Try an audiobook.

My second recommendation is Henry David Thoreau's experience of living alone in a secluded cabin at Walden Pond; an American literature classic, it still has meaning 165 years after its publication in 1854. **Walden: Life in the Woods** is a bright spot of social criticism and brilliant writing.

**The Call of the Wild** is our third must-read outdoors book. Published in 1903, the book draws from Jack London's experiences as a prospector in Canada. In the frozen Klondike, London fights for existence, and his indomitable human spirit shines in entertaining reading.

Annie Dillard won the 1975 Pulitzer Prize for **Pilgrim at Tinker Creek**. Known for her narrative prose in both fiction and non-fiction works, this is an account of Dillard's exploration of her own neighborhood for a year. She encounters muskrats, monarch butterflies, a coot, and grasshoppers, among others. This is a must read for nature lovers.

You've seen the movie...now read the book. **A River Runs Through It** (1976) by Norman Mclean. Fly fishing, logging and forest fires give you an appreciation for this masterpiece about life in the Rockies.

Yes, you're an adult, but you still need to read books about and for children. **Where the Red Fern Grows** (1961) details the lives of Billy and his Coonhound hunting dogs. Hunting in the Ozarks and a championship coon hunt with a \$300 jackpot mix with loss, death, and an angel who plants a red fern.

An easy chair in front of the fireplace and a multi-pillowed bed are good locations for reading these books. But since Spring has come to chase away the cold, I'd suggest it's time to resurrect the hammock or porch rocking chair and read one of these books after you've pulled the garden weeds.



## What Are You Reading?

For each issue, we ask Silver Streak readers to share what they've been reading, and they never disappoint!

**The Frackers** by Gregory Zuckerman. It describes the outrageous inside story of "The New Billionaire Wildcatters." The book was recommended by our Silver Frog instructor Tom Roberts, to his class on *The Oil Industry: From Prospect to Pipeline*.

— Ron Gantz

**Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive**, by Stephanie Land details the plight of a young, single mother. It begins with the author and her infant daughter living in a homeless shelter and follows her interactions with the many agencies that provide support. She finds work cleaning homes. In addition to working a few hours a week for a service company, she also cleans homes on her own. One example of her challenge with bureaucracy is she must verify earnings in order to qualify for housing, food and daycare assistance. She presents copies of handwritten checks as proof of income. The agency accepts handwritten checks from individuals, but requires her to drive back to her employer to get a 'real printed payroll check' from the company. This consumes half a day that she could have been working, earning less than \$10 an hour. I read this book while on a trip to Cuba. Pairing the economic situation of some citizens of the two countries was a harsh reminder that many people are teetering on the brink of economic catastrophe.

— Tim Runkle

I just finished a Dan Jenkins book, released last October, titled **Sports Makes You Type Faster**. It is a collection of his sports columns, written throughout his career, re-edited. Whether he writes fact or fiction, his books are always "laugh out loud" funny. It was especially poignant that he died while I was reading this book. We will miss him and his humor.

— Lisa Winter

**The Lost Girls of Paris** by Pam Jenoff is based on true events; the book showcases WWII events and follows three courageous women who braved constant danger to survive this little-known part of the war.

— Sian Borne

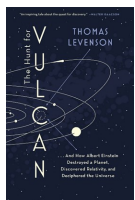
Just read **A Spark of Light** by Jodi Picoult. If you've not read Picoult's novels before, be aware that she tackles all sorts of societal issues, usually controversial ones such as abortion, racism, abandonment, etc. She somehow transforms these topics into readable, enjoyable novels. She makes you think, makes you want to investigate the topic and maybe even dialogue with others.

— Betsy McDaniel

[Tell us what you're reading for the May issue!](#)



## Intriguing Reads by Dan Calvin



**The Hunt for Vulcan** by Thomas Levenson is a mystery, but not one associated with conventional policemen or detectives. Despite its planetary name, it is not associated with Mr. Spock of Star Trek fame. Instead it is both a celebration and a critique of some of the most famous scientists of history.

**Isaac Newton:** who, with the publication of *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, devised a world-changing cosmology with three simple laws of motion and the inverse square equation for gravitational attraction. By mapping simple mathematical expressions to correspond to real physical events, he pioneered the power of the scientific method as an accurate modeling tool for events as small as the fall of an apple or as large as the motion of the planets. Along the way he discovered a few handy tools (like differential and integral calculus) that have been the backbone of physics and engineering modeling and discoveries since the 17th century. Newton's triumph was unprecedentedly complete.

**Pierre-Simon Laplace:** who verified with dazzling mathematical accuracy the truth of Newton's laws to the calculable orbits of the inner planets of the solar system (six known at the time: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. All were visible to the naked eye). He compared the increasingly accurate observations of the planetary motions with the complex equations derived from Newton and reconciled the reality of the observations with the result of the computations except for small perturbations of the orbits of the outermost planets. These perturbations threatened the soundness of Newton's laws, which had otherwise been demonstrated many times as accurate and predictive.

**Robert Herschel:** who in 1781 accidentally hit upon an observation that was later proven to be the seventh known planet, Uranus, whose existence partially explained the earlier discrepancies.

**Urbain-Jean-Joseph Le Verrier:** whose close study of the new planet Uranus uncovered new anomalies of motion. By further acts of prodigious mathematical analysis, Verrier was able to predict the current location and size of yet another previously unobserved planet. This audacious prediction was verified, and Neptune was added to the pantheon of planetary bodies.

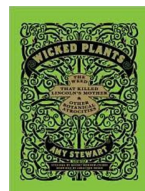
Finally, as observational details continued to improve with the succeeding developments of telescopic technology, one final set of difficulties was shown with the changing orbit of Mercury, at this time the innermost known planet.

By this time the pattern was firmly set. Newton had been proven right again and again. There must be yet one more hidden planet whose existence would explain the errant orbit of Mercury. Calculations were made, and the assumption was that the planet was located even closer to the Sun than Mercury itself. The new planet was given a mythological name, Vulcan (keeping with the tradition of naming planets after Roman deities, and especially appropriate because of its proximity to the sun for the association of the planet with a god of volcanoes and the hot forge). It was believed that the "discovery" of Vulcan was difficult to achieve due to the planet's proximity to the overwhelmingly bright corona of the sun. It could be searched for only during the short intervals of total eclipse.

The problem was that there was no such planet, and Newton's laws were not as universally applicable as all of the most rational minds had assumed. False solutions were proffered by defective observations of Vulcan that were not independently verified. The rest of the book explains the entire solution that had to wait for full explanation by the greatest scientist of the 20th century, **Albert Einstein**. His General Theory of Relativity provided the final piece of the puzzle of Mercury's orbit, while at the same time showing the limits of Newton's laws in the presence of large gravitational "wells" of the non-Euclidean geometry of space-time.

This book was a compelling read for me, satisfying my dual appetites for a well-told story, and a glimpse into the foibles of staggering historical figures. I had a real sense of the personalities involved along the way. Each of the Scientific Greats had associated missteps, follies, and vanities exposed. Vindicated above all is the scientific method itself, always a provisional principle, one that insists on verification by observable events.

Also, to coincide with the Gardening theme of this issue, I've been reading **Wicked Plants**, by Amy Stewart. I was introduced to the author when taking the TCU Continuing Education class *I Love a Mystery*, taught by the redoubtable Shari Barnes. Amy Stewart is a community planner by education, a bookstore owner by occupation, and a devotee of poisonous plants by avocation. The class presented her book *Girl Waits with Gun*, describing a fictionalized account of an historical figure, the first female assistant sheriff, appropriately named Constance Kopp. Although I did not find this book as compelling as some of the others in the class, I did follow up to read two of its sequels, each one an improvement on its predecessor.

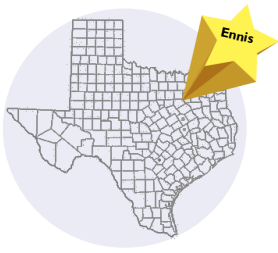


I was especially intrigued to shift gears with this book, however, as a completely non-fictional compendium along the lines of Amy Stewart's area of expertise, organized as a dictionary of noxious, stinging, and poisonous plants. Stewart herself cultivates a garden of such plants, described in *Popular Mechanics* as one of the 18 strangest gardens in the world.

One of the most interesting revelations of this book is the membership of some of the most benign plants (such as potatoes) in the same family of plants as the deadly nightshade Belladonna. The poison in potatoes is destroyed by cooking, but given exposure to sunlight the skin of the potato turns green, indicating a higher concentration of its particular poison; it can cause digestive problems and, rarely, leads to death. The unexpected potential of unhealthy side effects of many plants certainly gave me pause (and a confirmation of my wise decision not to become a vegetarian). Other descriptions include the common castor bean as the source of the deadly poison ricin, memorably associated with a murder-by-umbrella-tip of a Russian defector, and as a plot element used by Walter White in the popular series, *Breaking Bad*. This book would be a rich reference for mystery writers everywhere and was enjoyable to browse. It had some appealing, if morbid, illustrations and many references to specific historical and literary events.



## On One Tank of Gas: Ennis Bluebonnet Trails by Polly Hooper



Ennis Texas was designated by the 1997 Texas Legislature as the Official Bluebonnet City of Texas. If you can make it to the lovely vistas of the Texas Hill Country, consider driving about an hour southwest of Fort Worth to see over 40 miles of mapped bluebonnet trails. Typically the peak happens around the third week of April, but we had heard the season was early this year so we set out on April 2nd down Highway 287. I can tell you we certainly beat the crowds and we almost beat the bluebonnets!

We arrived about noon so we stopped in at the Wildflower Cafe on Knox in downtown Ennis for lunch. It is a tea room/gift shop that has wonderful food and offers great browsing with many temptations if you are in the market for home decor. I had the salad trio with fresh fruit, spinach salad and chicken salad and my husband chose the chef salad; both were delicious and the service was prompt and friendly. The Visitors Center was right across the street so we picked up a map of the trails there. There is a southern trail and a northern trail. We chose the northern; it is the longest (and prettiest in my opinion).



The fields were not yet full of blooms but in various places the sides of the roads were bursting with flowers. We loved the mixture of Indian Paintbrush amongst the Lupines with a backdrop of farm fences, tractors, barns and horses. There are not many places to pull over to take photos as there is no shoulder on the roads so you have to pull off at private entrances. We were lucky; we encountered only a handful of others who chose to make the drive and we were able to stop at several spots to take photos.

Two spots which are not on the trail maps that you should definitely visit if you go are Lake Bardwell and Bluebonnet Park, especially if you want photos of yourselves. Bluebonnets were not in bloom when we went this time but in years past were breathtaking.

Ennis now has a mobile app that you can download for IOS and Android. [Ennis Y'all](#) offers GPS locations as well as restaurants, shopping, lodging, and a calendar of events. The Visitors Center is also partnering with a tour company, Boppalong Tours, if you would rather someone else do the driving. They operate on select weekends and you can learn more [here](#).

April 17-21 there will be a carnival in downtown Ennis; so if you want to get spring photos of your grandchildren, this would be an added incentive to go then.



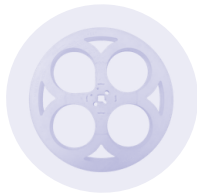
As we were leaving the northern trail, we happened upon some magnificent Belgian Draft horses that gathered near the fence and seemed to pose for photos. Their backs were about five feet tall and they had blonde manes and tails. Some other folks said there is usually a barrel of food there for visitors to hand feed them. It was not there when we stopped, but it surely must be why they were all gathered at the fence.

Don't forget to take your camera with you to Ennis!





## What Are You Watching?



The first week of May will be the premiere of the new documentary film ***The River and the Wall***, which follows a group of friends who travel the 1200 miles of the Rio Grande from El Paso to the Gulf Coast. It explores the beautiful scenery and the impact of a border wall on the people who live along the border. ***The River and the Wall*** debuted in Austin at the recent SXSW film festival. It is the work of documentary film director Ben Masters. You can find it in local theaters beginning the first week of May.

-- Jeff Frazer

[Tell us what you're watching for the May issue!](#)

## Might as Well Come Clean... Spring Cleaning Confessions by Linda Eastwick

Spring! The time of renewal, tulips, and...cleaning! Yup, it's Spring Cleaning time! Who doesn't love deep diving under the couch, getting showered by dust while mopping the ceiling fans, and turning the mattress while trying hard not to knock out the lighting?

My Spring Cleaning always involves de-cluttering. I cannot clean under, around, or beside any surface before I do something with all of the stuff that has accumulated there.

I think of my mom during this time. She made house-keeping seem so effortless. "If you take care of the corners, the rest of the room will take care of itself," she told me every Saturday during room-cleaning time.

I never understood that bit of wisdom, because when I cleaned out all of the junk from the corners, it ended up in the middle of the room. And it definitely did not take care of itself.

It was a constant struggle to figure out where to put things, what to move to make room for new things, and how to find things that I put away. In my mind, if it wasn't in full view, it didn't exist.

Fast forward to the present, when I took an online test to help me find my preferred action-style. I finally realized why it's so much more enjoyable to read about cleaning and de-cluttering than to actually do it. I apparently need facts, and a lot of them, before I can begin a project. I eagerly read Marie Kondo's book and binge-watched her show on Netflix. Sadly, enlightenment did not produce the *House Beautiful* image I'd anticipated.

There is only one method of cleaning and de-cluttering that has worked consistently for me: Invite Company Over (ICO). My daughter recently shared the story of how I used this method back in the day: "XX is coming over tomorrow! Pick this stuff up! Start vacuuming!

Don't let them see how we really live!" Using the ICO method produces enough adrenalin to initiate action. And...it ensures an enjoyable time with friends.

So, my Spring Cleaning will involve an invitation to my neighbors to come over next Thursday for a bit of wine and cheese. And a lot of scrambling on Wednesday! It's a win-win!



## There's an App for That? by Sharon Harrelson

Yes, you can take your tech outside and test out these mobile apps for gardening help and plant identification! Or if you're more into animals than plants, there are apps for that too. Here are just a few of the MANY available for free; search the PlayStore or Apple Store for more!

- [Homegrown with Bonnie Plants](#) or [Burpee Garden Time Planner](#) in the garden
- [Garden Answers](#) or [PlantSnap](#) for help identifying plants
- [Merlin Bird ID](#) for birders, [iNaturalist](#) for animals (and plants)

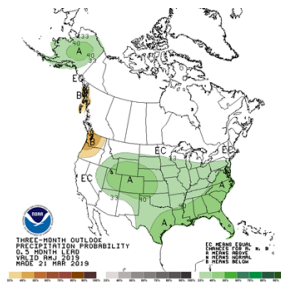
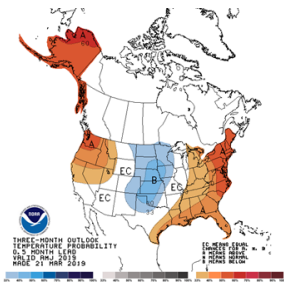


## Good Gardening Weather Forecast! by Buddy McIntyre



It's spring! We are well past March 12th, the date of the average last freeze for the DFW area. The date of the latest last freeze is April 13th, which occurred in both 1957 and 1997.

The [Climate Prediction Center](#) has calculated equal chances for above, near, and below normal temperatures for the DFW area for the April - June period. Hopefully that means we will be near normal! There's also good news for precipitation, with chances favoring above normal precipitation for the period. And the good news continues as there is little change in this forecast for the summer months.



Although many of the effects of climate change will be beyond our lifetimes, the McIntyres plan for hotter summer temperatures and more droughts when designing our landscape. We incorporate more hardscape in our yard in order to reduce the amount of water needed for the lawn. We also use more containers for gardening in order to provide flexibility in moving plants to shady areas of the yard during the heat of summer.

Warmer weather also brings the threat of severe weather — tornadoes, hail, and strong thunderstorm winds. Now is the time to prepare for severe weather. Here are two things everyone should do:

- Have a way to receive weather warnings, even in the middle of the night. Using a NOAA weather radio is one reliable way to learn when warnings are issued.
- Know what to do when warnings are issued, especially for tornadoes. Some of us have basements, a preferred location for protection. Otherwise, you will want to seek shelter on the lowest floor of your home in an area in the center of the house. You want to put as many walls as you can between you and a tornado.

I also think about our garden when severe weather threatens. We have over 60 pots of plantings. It's some trouble, but in the face of imminent, severe weather we squeeze as many of these as possible around the cars in the garage. The black plastic containers plants come in from the nursery make good covers for smaller plantings. Think about what might work for you and your garden.



Additional weather information can be found at [www.weather.gov/fwd](http://www.weather.gov/fwd) and you can always contact me at [buddy.mcintyre@att.net](mailto:buddy.mcintyre@att.net).



## Are Your Investments Diversified? by Richard Ranc



Have you been advised to be diversified to lessen the risk of having too many eggs in one basket? My rule of thumb is: invest in mutual funds in qualified retirement portfolios, and hold stocks and bonds in non-retirement regular accounts. The rationale is that long-term gains in stocks and bonds are taxed at lower rates (if they are held for more than a year), and losses can be recognized. All income from retirement accounts is taxed as regular income — no capital gain or loss treatment — and therefore, usually taxed at higher rates. The treatment of gains and losses in non-retirement accounts, under current tax law, is more favorable. Capital gains and losses go unrecognized in retirement accounts.

Think you are diversified? Not necessarily. As an example, suppose the portfolio in your regular account

holds shares of IBM, Apple, Microsoft, Cisco, Merck, and ATT. In your retirement account you hold growth funds with investment companies such as Fidelity, Vanguard, and American Funds.

All told, you feel pretty confident having four mutual funds and eight to ten individual stocks. But wait, how many of these stocks are held in the average growth and income mutual fund? Answer: All of them! So, are you really diversified? The answer is no. You have duplicate stocks that are being held in your mutual funds.

Be thoughtful and examine the holdings in your mutual funds and compare them to your individual stock holdings. You may find that duplications abound, and there is a need to adjust for diversification. Once you have examined your holdings and made adjustments, you may then be truly diversified.





# Thank you, Silver Streak Contributors!



**Shari Barnes** (*Outdoor Reading*) has taught TCU Extended Education's *I Love A Mystery* for several years and has facilitated *Bucket List Books* since the Silver Frogs beginning. Shari has also written for numerous popular and professional magazines. She is happy with a book and a cup of coffee.



**Nancy B. Ranc** (*Tomato Time*) was a Master Gardener in Lancaster County, Virginia and in Williamson County, Texas. She is now a member of the Arlington Garden Club. Nancy is a retired education administrator and became a member of Silver Frogs in 2017.



**Sian Borne** (*Newsletter Staff*) A Silver Frog since Spring '17, Sian came to Fort Worth in 1973, after moving to the US from England. She has two daughters and five grandchildren. She loves to read and travel, and is active in several Silver Frog committees, as well as being the SIG Chair.



**Richard Ranc** (*DIY Water Feature, Investments, Newsletter Staff*) came to Silver Frogs following a 10-year affiliation with Senior University in Georgetown. His background also includes time as VP of Investments at Wachovia Securities and contributing financial articles to various publications.



**Dan Calvin** (*Intriguing Reads*) Dan and his wife, Elizabeth, are charter members of Silver Frogs. Dan has been a lifelong film buff and has a penchant for acquiring useless trivia that he likes to parcel out, sometimes appropriately.



**Ann Shelton** (*Newsletter Staff*) is a charter member of Silver Frogs. She retired after many years as an Administrative / Executive Assistant, and now enjoys being a grandmother, playing tennis and volunteering. She serves as chairperson of the Luncheon Lecture Committee.



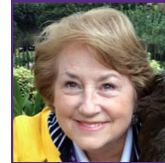
**Linda Eastwick** (*Coming Clean, Newsletter Staff*) is a former educator and her passions – besides all things grandchild-related – include researching and writing. She embraces the Minimalist movement, but is 37 boxes and two file cabinets away from becoming one.



**Randy Smith** (*Fall 2019, Photographer*) was the 2017-18 Silver Frogs Advisory Board president, and is also an active member, committee member and instructor. His hobbies include astronomy, Scouting, and photography.



**Diane Griffin** (*Newsletter Staff*) has enjoyed Silver Frogs since Spring 2016 and is an enthusiastic advocate for lifelong learning. She is a retired business owner who loves reading, writing, listening, travel, theater, volunteering, and frequent interaction with family and friends.



**Carolyn Stephens** (*Instructor Spotlight, Newsletter Staff*) came to Silver Frogs two years ago after a career in journalism, public relations and crisis communications. She loves the concept of lifelong learning and enjoys reading, cooking, gardening and new adventures.



**Sharon Harrelson** (*Luncheon Lecture, Apps, Editor*) is a Fort Worth native who has been editing various publications for work and fun since middle school. She's currently the Advisory Board vice president; she also enjoys cooking/baking, gardening, photography and being a band mom to twin sons.



**Lisa Winter** (*Topgolf, BRIT*) has been a Silver Frog since Fall of 2016. She is active on the Advisory Board as Special Events Chairman. Lisa is a TCU neighbor and a Frog Club member.



**Polly Hooper** (*On One Tank of Gas, Athletics, Photographer, Newsletter Staff*) is a native Texan and is passionate about all types of photography. Her hobbies include travel and reading. She also loves to play games and is in a neighborhood book club. Her grandsons keep her very busy as well.



**Buddy McIntyre** (*Forecasts*) worked for 30 years as a meteorologist with the National Weather Service (NWS), where he gained considerable experience studying and warning for severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. Buddy is a graduate of TCU and has an MS in meteorology from Utah State University.

[Click here to read back issues of Silver Streak.](#)

## Mark Your Calendar



**April 22** Session III classes begin

**April 23** The Great Silver Frogs Cookie Challenge\*  
Kelly Center, 1:00-2:30pm, FREE

**April 26** Walking tour of TCU campus\*, 1:00-2:30pm, FREE

**May 17** Luncheon Lecture and Last Day, Spring Semester

**May 22** End of Semester Celebration\*  
Joe T Garcia's 6:00-8:00pm

Fall 2019 Membership Registration:

**May 20-21** Current Member Renewal

**May 22** Spring Waitlist Registration

**May 23** Remaining spots open to General Public

\*Special events require a reservation, usually have a limited number of spaces, and there may be a fee to participate. You will see an email when registration opens for special events.

What do you enjoy about Silver Streak? [Click here](#) to send us an email with your feedback or suggestions.



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