

GLEE INGRAM

Greenbelt Guardians

Founder 2003-Present

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Our Greenbelt Guardians volunteer group came into existence as a result of my son surprising me with a puppy that he brought all the way from Arkansas. I had no fence, and my steeply sloped lot was incompatible for constructing one. The solution was to take my dog for daily walks in the neighborhood.

I soon discovered the Homedale Street entry to the Barton Creek Greenbelt trail near my home. I later explored the rest of the trails from the other entry points along the Greenbelt, from Zilker Park to Spyglass Trail.

I was both delighted to be able to experience our Hill Country terrain, and disturbed to see that it was being invaded by non-native plants like Ligustrum and Nandina. When the neighborhood was developed, our regional native plants were not yet available in the nursery industry. The walking trails were also eroding and had potential tripping hazards.

My profession was as a landscape designer and contractor, specializing in the use of native plants. The proliferation of non-native plants throughout the greenbelt trail seemed an affront to our rich Hill Country ecosystem.

I made appointments with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department managers to express my concerns, and to offer to create a volunteer working group that could address the problem. After many meetings, the City Parks Department gave their permission.

I then approached our Barton Hills Neighborhood Association to approve of and help promote volunteers to help maintain the Greenbelt. The work would focus on removing invasive plants, and to also maintain and improve the greenbelt trail surfaces, and address any safety issues that we identified. Permission was granted, and the Barton Hills Greenbelt Guardians came to life.

We worked through the City of Austin Parks Department initially, until the Austin Parks Foundation (APF) was founded. We then worked through APF to promote our quarterly work days, and to raise funds to support our work.

We qualified for funds from TCEQ (Texas Center for Environmental Quality), which has allowed us to hire trainees of the Texas Environmental Corps to efficiently remove the invasive plants and to repair and resurface some of the trail areas.

The Greenbelt Guardians, sponsored by the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association, celebrated its 16th anniversary on Saturday, March 02, 2019. We had 60 volunteers donating almost 200 hours of labor, repairing and resurfacing the Gus Fruh entry access to the Greenbelt walking trail.



