

Cooperative Wildflowers at Lakeside Country Club

Naturalization through cooperation.

BY JOSHUA CONWAY



From March to June the course comes alive with color from the wildflowers near the #3 green.

The word *Cooperative* is often an overlooked aspect of the program name: Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses. However, cooperation is vital to Audubon International's approach to environmental stewardship. We are always delighted when members share stories of engaging the surrounding community to improve the environment where they live, work, and play.

One such story resulted from the 2010 Managed Land Survey to establish a designated wildflower area at Lakeside Country Club in Houston, Texas. As a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary since 1995, Lakeside Country Club has a long-standing commitment to the environment. What makes this story unique is that the idea for the wildflower area project was conceived at an environmental field

day at Kingwood Country Club, another Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.

"After speaking to the owner of Wildseed Farms of Fredricksburg, Texas, we decided to try to establish a designated wildflower area between two lakes on our property," stated Dee Dee Hutcherson, horticulturalist for Lakeside Country Club. Formerly, the area between the two lakes was an



Black-eyed Susan is a drought-resistant wildflower that is native to the central United States from Wisconsin to Texas.

unsightly area of the golf course that was prone to erosion and very visible from the #3 green and the #4 tee box. "I wanted to see if wildflowers would really grow in the area and if members would notice," Hutcherson relays.

The area was prepared by mowing it to a height of 0.25 inch in October. Following a visit from Tom Kramer, botanist from Wildseed Farms, a seed mix was selected that was native to Southeastern Texas and would do well in full sun with no irrigation. The mix included: Texas Bluebonnet, Indian Blanket, Scarlet Flax, Tickseed, Lemon Mint, Coneflower, Larkspur, Cosmos, African Daisy, Coreopsis, Black-eyed Susan, Toadflax, Primrose, Mexican Hat, Indian Paintbrush and Tall Poppy Mallow. Seed was then mixed with sand and spread with a walk-behind rotary spreader in two directions — from east to west and then north to south. Spreading the seed in this manner was crucial to maintain even seed cover. After that, the only thing left was to communicate with the Lakeside Country Club membership to let them know what to expect in the spring.

The following spring, the wildflower area quickly became a huge success. "The area was a focal point on the golf

course from March until June. It serves to attract butterflies and bees to the property, and maintenance is very easy. By October it had already re-seeded itself, making it ready for spring," added Hutcherson. Allowing the blooms to dry and the seeds to drop, Lakeside Country Club staff then mowed the area to a half inch in late fall.

"The results were far better than I could have ever hoped for! It was so easy and very inexpensive. The only cost to the project was the seed itself, \$215.52, and three man-hours. We were able to naturalize and establish approximately one-half acre and decrease labor and equipment hours in that area. The area was not only beautiful, but it provides a natural habitat for butterflies, bees, and small wildlife," Hutcherson says. "The results of this project are very rewarding and we have had so many compliments from golfers, members, and their guests. The visual success of this project will be extremely helpful in the future, when we try to naturalize other areas. I believe we accomplished our number-one goal of placing a positive image in the mind of members so they will allow more and more naturalization to take place in the future."

JOSHUA CONWAY is the Education and Communications Manager for Audubon International. He can be contacted at jconway@auduboninternational.org. For more information on the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, call (518) 767-9051, extension 110.



Lakeside Country Club has been designated as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary since 1995 and has demonstrated a long-term commitment to the environment. The wildlife area project demonstrates how golf courses can easily lower maintenance costs, increase appeal, and provide habitat.