

Green Spaces Alliance Secret Gardens Tour

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The residents of the San Antonio area have done a marvelous job of protecting their water resources. The effort has included reducing per capita water use and protecting the quality of our water resources. In the past I have written about the conservation education programs of the San Antonio Water System, the Trinity Glen Rose Water Conservation District, San Antonio River Authority, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, The Bexar County Master Gardeners, the Gardening Volunteers of South Texas, and other entities.

Another organization that deserves recognition and support is the Green Spaces Alliance. Their role in the water resource effort involves three main areas.

- Green Spaces Alliance is a major player in the water conservation easement program. San Antonio residents over the last few decades have voted to dedicate a portion of the sales tax funds collected to pay fees to landowners over the Edwards Aquifer to maintain their aquifer friendly land use practices. The easements limit land division, industrialization and urbanization on 133,000 acres of lands important to aquifer water collection and quality.
- The Organization has a system of over 40 neighborhood gardens that provide garden space and educational assistance to apartment dwellers and low-income residents who benefit by access to the organized plots spread throughout the City. The urban garden education programs provide environmentally appropriate instruction and emphasize efficient water use in addition to promoting healthy food production.
- For youth, Green Spaces Alliance operates the “Picture Your World Youth Photography” program for 3500 youngsters in addition to other education programs.

Green Spaces Alliance is the subject of this article to give them credit for their important role in the SA water conservation effort but also because they are offering an education program called the “Secret Gardens Tour” as part of a fundraising effort on Saturday May 19, 2018 from 8:30-11:30 AM. The tour will give participants access to outstanding landscapes in the King William area.

The educational impact of the Tour is potent because it includes some of the best shade landscapes in the City. As landscapes mature they invariably become more shaded. With the area’s hot weather, the shade is important, but it also provides many challenges. The landscapes on the King William Tour will provide examples of shade tolerant plant options that can be effective in other shady landscapes. The use of water efficient groundcovers is especially impressive. A number of the tour sites rely on attractive adjacent layers of shade tolerant groundcovers traversed by paths of flagstone, decomposed granite and other materials.

The Tour landscapes are located close enough to each other for you to walk or bike between the sites if you prefer that to driving. Each “Secret Garden” will be staffed by the home owner or other volunteers knowledgeable about the plants on the site.

For those individuals that participate in the offered lunch at the The Monty and Ivy Hall (11:30-1:00 PM), Milbergers Gardening South Texas radio program (Jerry Parsons and I) will be available at the lunch site

to answer your gardening questions. The volunteers involved in organizing the tour have been especially conscious of the butterfly activity in the area. Considering the growing interest in producing butterflies in area landscapes, it will be interesting to see what nectar producing and egg-laying host plants are prospering in the King William shady landscapes.

Green Spaces Alliance is a non-profit organization and this Tour as part of their fundraising program does have a fee. For more information on participating visit the GSA website at <https://greensatx.org/featured event/>.