

# Welcome to the Easy Access Loop

The Easy Access Loop allows physically-challenged visitors to interact with and enjoy Wild Basin. It's also a great way to begin exploring the preserve. As you go around the trail, be sure to check out a few of our natural highlights listed below. Remember to stay on the trails to avoid causing damage to the habitat.

- 1. Ashe juniper (*Juniperus ashei*):** Also known as cedar, this tree has feathery green leaves and twisted grayish-red trunks. The bark grows in long strips that peel away from the trunk.
- 2. Twisted-leaf yucca (*Yucca rupicola*):** This tree has long, narrow green leaves that grow straight when the tree is young but twist into a spiral as they age.
- 3. Star moss (*Tortula ruralis*):** This tiny ground plant is made up of brownish-yellow patches and is drought-resistant. Tiny mosses such as this help slow erosion and absorb water, helping other nearby plants to take root.
- 4. Texas redbud (*Cercis Canadensis var. texensis*):** This tree has smooth, grayish-white bark and waxy, heart-shaped leaves. In the spring, clusters of red buds appear and eventually bloom into pinkish-purple flower before the leaf appears.
- 5. Agarita (*Berberis trifoliolata*):** This shrub is grayish-green and looks like holly with leaves in groups of threes and sharp spines at each point. In the spring, it blooms fragrant clusters of yellow flowers that give way to red berries that are a source of food for birds and small mammals.
- 6. Sacahuista (*Nolina texana*):** Also known as Basket grass, it has long, grass-like evergreen leaves. It is often found growing along wooden limestone ledges and slopes. In the spring, its flowers grow in clusters on short stalks hidden among the leaves.
- 7. Much of the typical habitat of the Texas Hill Country is characterized by scrubby oak and juniper woodlands.** You'll find Plateau live oak (*Quercus fusiformis*) growing together with Ashe juniper (*Juniperus ashei*) to create pockets of dense forest. The mature sections of this forest are the only areas in the world where the endangered Golden-cheeked warbler (*Dendroica chrysoparia*) lives and breeds.

## 8. Texas prickly pear (*Opuntia engelmannii var. lindheimeri*):

This cactus is common across Texas and has flat oval-shaped pads that bear long spines and tiny hair-like spines. In the spring, yellow-orange flowers appear. In the fall, purple fruit called tuna, is ready for picking.

## 9. Texas mountain laurel (*Sophora secundiflora*):

This shrub has dark thin trunks and firm shiny leaflets. In early spring, large clusters of bluish purple flowers appear. These flowers are known for a powerful sweet fragrance that attracts pollinating insects.

## 10. Lindheimer silktassel (*Garrya lindheimeri*):

This compact evergreen shrub is extremely drought tolerant. The dark purple fruit is a food source for many small animals. The leaves are flat and leathery with wavy edges.

## 11. Lindheimer's bear grass (*Nolina lindheimeri*):

Also known as Devil's shoestring, this shrub looks like a large clump of grass, but it's really related to yuccas and agaves. It has long, narrow, evergreen leaves with tiny teeth along the edges. In spring white flowers grow along a tall slender stalk above the leaves.

## 12. Catclaw mimosa (*Mimosa borealis*):

This shrub, also known as Pink mimosa, has thorns, small fuzzy pinkish-white flowers, and small leaves with fine leaflets. Like most mimosas the fine leaflets are sensitive and can move when touched.

## 13. Evergreen sumac (*Rhus virens*):

This shrub has small, dark, green and shiny leaves with a round narrow shape. In late summer and fall, it blooms creamy white flowers, which can attract many pollinating insects. The fuzzy red seeds are a food source for birds and mammals.

## 14. Scenic Overlook: Take a moment and look across the trail at the view of the hills through the preserve. These are the foothills of the eastern edge of the Edwards Plateau, also known as the Texas Hill Country. Creeks and rivers flowing across the plateau cut through the limestone layers below, carving out hills, terraces, and canyons. This is known as the Balcones Canyonlands.

## 15. Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*):

This native grass has bluish-green stems in spring and summer, but golden-red over the winter. Seed heads shaped like little combs grow to the side of the stems of Hairy grama (*Bouteloua hirsuta*).

## 16. Bridge: This protects the soil around a natural seep in the limestone rock layers underfoot. A seep is typically a moist area where groundwater has slowly come to the surface from water-bearing layers of rock. Here the water seeps from the limestone layers above the bridge and spreads down

the slope. Native grasses like Seep muhly (*Muhlenbergia reverchonii*) take advantage of this steady moisture, and flourish at this spot.

## 17. Yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*):

This evergreen shrub grows along all of the trails at Wild Basin. It has smooth light gray bark and dark shiny leaves. From late summer through winter bright red berries appear. These berries provide food for raccoons, ringtails, squirrels, and many songbirds.

## 18. Texas red oak (*Quercus buckleyi*):

Like many oaks, Texas red oak is a fire-adapted species that can regenerate a new tree from surviving underground roots. Many of the mature oaks in the preserve survived a wildfire in 1961, and now grow multiple trunks from the same root.

## 19. Escarpment black cherry (*Prunus serotina*):

This tree is valued for its wood, which is used in furniture and paneling. It has shiny, oval-shaped green leaves. In April and May, the black cherry blooms clusters of white flowers, which are followed by small cherries that turn black from August through October.

## 20. Animal scat: In this open rocky area, several types of mammals native to the preserve often leave their mark. Look around for small dried piles of animal scat. Some may be left prominently on top of a rock, to help mark a territory. If you look closely you might be able to determine the diet of the animal. Raccoon and ringtail scat will often contain seeds or berries, and will take on the reddish color of the fruit.

## What is Wild Basin?

Wild Basin a 227-acre wilderness preserve nestled in the heart of the Hill Country, 20 minutes away from downtown Austin.

## About our Trails

Trails are open sunrise to sunset daily for self-guided hikes. Admission is free and donations are appreciated (\$3 for adults; \$2 for ages 5–12 and seniors).

Please stay on the trail, and leave pets and bicycles at home. Portable restrooms are located in the parking area; no picnic facilities are available. Please do not disturb any plants, animals or rocks — everything is protected on the preserve. Wild Basin is a smoke-free environment.

## Learn About Nature

Wild Basin offers educational programs for pre-K through college students along with customized programs for groups, such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

## Enjoy Our Events

Wild Basin offers monthly events, such as stargazing, flint knapping (making arrowheads), guided hikes and concerts.

## Getting to Wild Basin

Wild Basin is located at:  
805 Capital of Texas Highway (Loop 360)  
Austin, Texas 78746

## Volunteer at Wild Basin

Join a talented and dedicated family of volunteers who lead preschool groups, school groups and families/individuals on hikes through the preserve, highlighting the special natural features of the Texas Hill Country.

## Contact Wild Basin

- Call 512-327-7622
- E-mail hike@wildbasin.org
- Visit [www.wildbasin.org](http://www.wildbasin.org)
- Become a member
- Make a donation at [www.stedwards.edu/giving](http://www.stedwards.edu/giving) or call 512-464-8826



# Explore Wild Basin

A natural resource laboratory of St. Edward's University

**SELF-GUIDED TRAIL MAP**

# GET HIKING

We hope you enjoy our 2.5 miles of hiking trails. Not sure where to start? This helpful guide and map shows the available trails and distances. As you go around the trail, be sure to check out a few of our natural highlights listed below. Remember to stay on the trails to avoid causing damage to the habitat.

- **Easy Access Loop:** 0.39 mile (Designed especially for visitors with physical challenges)
- **Laurel Trail:** 0.11 mile
- **Falls Trail:** 0.1 mile
- **Madrone Trail:** 0.61 mile
- **Creek Trail:** 0.46 mile
- **Woodland Trail:** 0.16 mile
- **The Ledge Trail:** 0.20 mile
- **Possum Trail:** 0.14 mile
- **Triknee Trail:** 0.15 mile

**A. Lindheimer silktassel (*Garrya lindheimeri*):** A compact evergreen shrub with a dark purple berry that is a food source for many small animals. The leaves are flat and leathery with wavy edges.

**B. Glen Rose Formation:** Look across the highway at the rock layers in the road cut. Groups of layers are called formations, and the Glen Rose Formation is the group of yellowish layers at the bottom of the cut. The Glen Rose is the same formation underfoot along the trails at Wild Basin, including where you are standing now. These layers began as sediment at the bottom of a warm shallow sea around 115 million years ago. The muds and sands were gradually buried and solidified over time into the limestone layers that exist today.

**C. Wafer ash (*Ptelea trifoliata*):** Also known as the Hop tree, this young tree has mottled gray and white bark. The bark, crushed leaves and twigs have a lemon-like odor. The seeds or fruits are wafer-thin, round, and papery. They hang down in clusters and are eventually carried away by the wind.

**D. Lindheimer's bear grass (*Nolina lindheimeri*):** Also known as Devil's shoestring, this shrub looks like a large clump of grass, but it's really related to yuccas and agaves. It has long, narrow, evergreen leaves with tiny teeth along the edges. In spring white flowers grow along a tall slender stalk above the leaves.

**E. Sacahuista (*Nolina texana*):** Also known as Basket grass, it has long, grass-like evergreen leaves. It is often found growing along wooden limestone ledges and slopes. In the spring, its flowers grow in clusters on short stalks hidden among the leaves.

**F. Eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) and Black willow (*Salix nigra*):** Both trees are often found growing near the water; here they line the Northwest Hollow that empties into Bee Creek.

**G. Bee Creek:** On the south side of the trail, stop at the view of the falls and sit on the bench. Bee Creek is the main waterway that flows through the preserve. It supports a great diversity of plant and animal life. Over the years the waters of the creek have eroded away hundreds of feet of overlying rock and soil to form the hills and ravines of Wild Basin.

**H. Across the trail from the marker, you may notice the exposed tree roots protruding from the limestone.** As roots search for water and nutrients, they can push through even the tiniest crack in rock. In this case, the juniper and oak roots have found more moisture in the crumbly, "marly," top and bottom layers of limestone. Over time the roots were exposed as they forced the soft rock layers to crumble away.

**I. Texas red oak or Spanish oak (*Quercus buckleyi*):** These smaller trees have light gray and white bark with a few furrows. Like many oaks, Texas red oak is a fire-adapted species that can regenerate a new tree from surviving underground roots. Many of the mature oaks in the preserve survived a wildfire in 1961, and now grow multiple trunks from the same root.

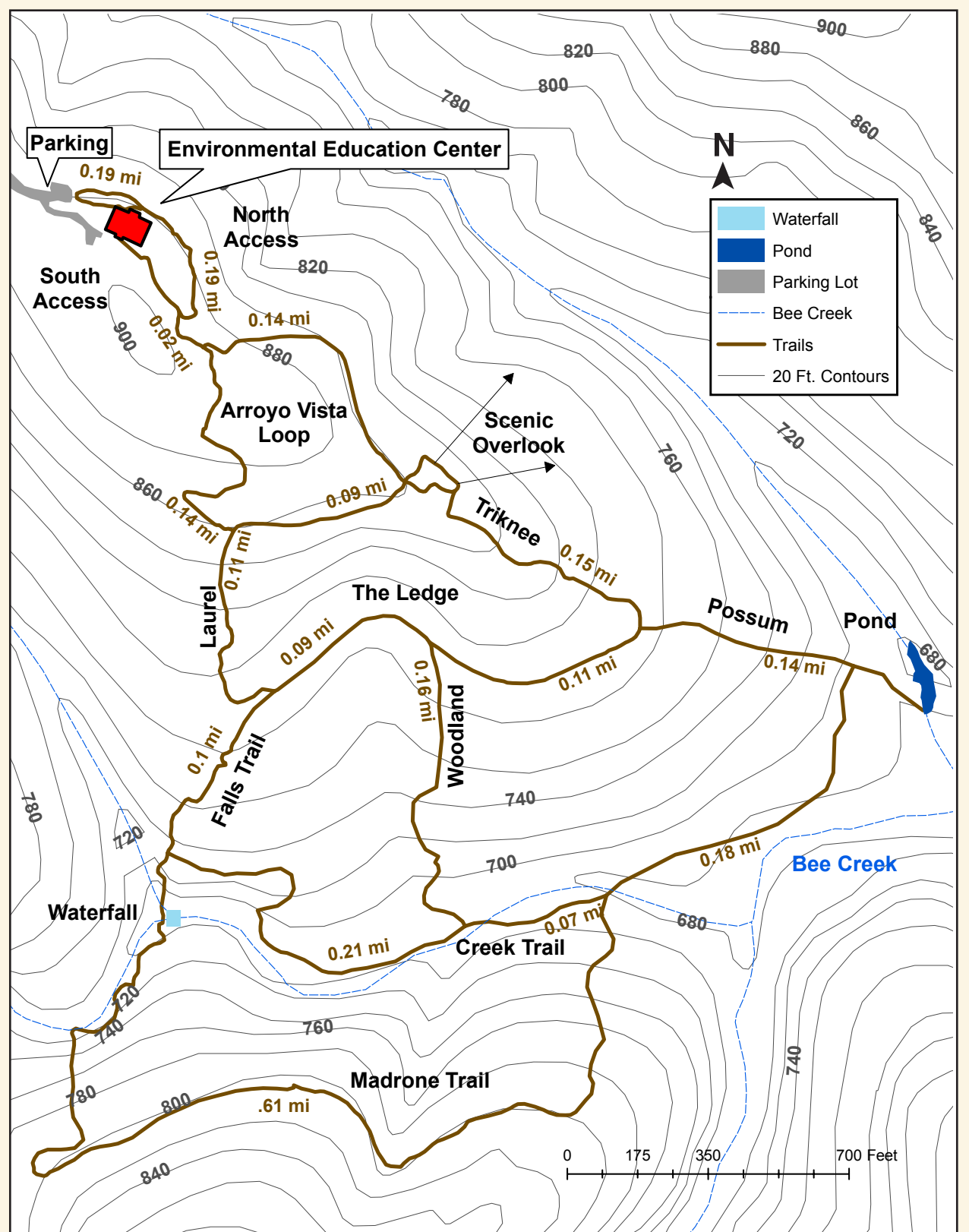
**J. Twisted-leaf yucca (*Yucca rupicola*):** This tree has long, narrow green leaves that grow straight when the tree is young but twist into a spiral as they age.

**K. Plateau live oak (*Quercus fusiformis*):** Live oaks are long-lived, and may grow to 50 feet tall. They appear to be evergreen, but actually drop leaves and grow new ones within a few weeks each spring.

**L. Yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*)** grows along all of the trails at Wild Basin. This evergreen shrub has smooth light gray bark and dark shiny leaves. The leaves contain caffeine and toxic compounds.

**M. Arizona walnut (*Juglans major*):** This tree has narrow leaves on both sides of every stem and dark, furrowed bark. It typically grows in the moist soils of floodplains, or along streams as it does here along Bee Creek. The fruit is a round husk with a thick shell that encloses a hard, tasty nut.

**N. As you cross the creek, notice the diversity of grasses at this open, sunny spot.** There are clumps of Inland sea oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) with flat drooping seeds that turn purplish-brown in the summer. Easter gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*) is a large bunchgrass that looks similar to corn, and each leaf has a thick white stripe along the middle. These species grow best in moist, well-drained soils.



**O. Under the shady canopy in the moist soils of creek bottomland, there are many species of plants that are not found in the rest of the preserve.** Look for the bright purple berries of the American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) shrub. A small Rough leaf dogwood (*Cornus drummodii*) emerges through the juniper to the left of the marker.

**P. Red buckeye or Firecracker plant (*Aesculus pavia*):** A shrub with five leaflets that meet at a central point growing along its smooth gray trunk. Tubular scarlet red flowers form in clusters in spring, and attract hummingbirds and insects.

**Q. Flash floods occur in many parts of the Texas Hill Country and the preserve has had its share.** The force of a great volume of water can erode streambanks, uproot trees, and even change the course of rivers. Here the roots of the small Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) are now in the middle of the creek and almost completely exposed.

**R. Texas prickly pear (*Opuntia engelmannii* var. *lindheimeri*):** This cactus is common across Texas and has flat oval-shaped pads that bear long spines and tiny hair-like spines. In the spring, yellow-orange flowers appear. In the fall, purple fruit called tuna, is ready for picking.

**S. Throughout the preserve the land is managed to protect the balance of native plant and animal species.** This may involve reseeding, relocating plants to prevent erosion, and removing invasion and non-native plants. These preserve restoration projects allow Wild Basin to maintain its Texas Hill Country or Balcones Canyonlands habitat.

**T. Agarita (*Berberis trifoliolata*):** This shrub is grayish-green and looks like holly with leaves in groups of threes and sharp spines at each point. In the spring, it blooms fragrant clusters of yellow flowers that give way to red berries that are a source of food for birds and small mammals.

**U. Cedar elm (*Alnus crassifolia*):** This tree has leaves that are small, lined and rough, and glossy green. Note the forked trunk of this tall tree – a healthy Cedar elm can reach up to 70 feet tall.

**V. At this spot note the several large limestone rocks with interesting tunnels and holes.** Some of these holes are fossils of animal trails and burrows, most likely from tube worms that lived in the shallow sea that existed here 115 million years ago. Tube worms stir up the ocean bottom when building homes, rooting for food, and escaping predators.

**W. In several locations along the trail, plant seedlings are protected with wire enclosures.** On the preserve a large population of white-tailed deer constantly feeds on tender young plant seedlings. Here several Red oak seedlings are purposefully protected from grazing. Red oaks host insect larvae that are a food source for the endangered Golden-cheeked warbler. Protecting the seedlings until they are large enough to survive browsing helps ensure that future birds will have food on the preserve.

**X. Limestone steps:** These "steps" began as sediment at the bottom of a warm shallow sea that covered much of modern-day Texas from 140 to 162 million years ago. Muds and sands were gradually buried and solidified over time into the limestone layers that exist today. Because the soft layers erode more easily, the hard limestone remains, forming natural steps in some locations.

**Y. Texas redbud (*Cercis Canadensis* var. *texensis*):** This tree has smooth, grayish-white bark and waxy, heart-shaped leaves. In the spring, clusters of red buds appear and eventually bloom into pinkish-purple flower before the leaf appears.

**Z. Evergreen sumac (*Rhus virens*):** This shrub has small, dark, green and shiny leaves with a round narrow shape. In late summer and fall, it blooms creamy white flowers, which can attract many pollinating insects. The fuzzy red seeds are a food source for birds and mammals.