

## Shrink the Lawn: An Eight Year Journey

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When we were looking for a house in 2014, we had decided we wanted space, so we would not have a neighbor right outside our window, and ideally we wanted to live near a resaca. As the new school year loomed and our house hunting had failed to produce any results, we decided to give up until next summer; however, we had one more home to see. It was a winner!

Having just finished my Texas Master Naturalist training (Barbara had tagged along with me, she would complete her training in 2015), we knew about natives but still had not made them an integral part of our lives. The home that we moved into, was not a stellar candidate for being native friendly.



2014:

Cedar elm, Honey  
mesquite, Live oak,  
Mexican olive, Texas  
ebony

*Google Earth photo (Aug. 2014)*

Fast forward to 2022 and our ongoing journey has brought about change.



While we purposefully planted some natives, many plants came up after we left nature be itself. We did let some plants grow that later turned out to be invasives and we also learned that some natives did not like being relocated or coddled. Natives like to grow where they like to grow.

Our endeavor required me to change my process of mowing. I could no longer simply mow short and often. Instead I set the mower at the highest level and move slowly to let the butterflies, moths, frogs, grasshoppers, and other fauna get out of the way while I keep a sharp eye for anything growing amongst the grass. I also wait a month between mows to allow natives a chance to make themselves visible.

We are still adding natives to our lawn to increase our diversity and thus make further improvements to our yard's contribution to our regional ecosystem. While we still have some lawn to tend to, it has shrunk significantly.

As an added benefit, we have been simply amazed at the butterflies we have seen this year! We are true believers of "if you plant it, they will come" or alternatively "if you let them grow, they will come".

