

# Local

## Ornamental plants, hedges costly

# Native plants could save money

Texas may soon have to change their ideas of what a park should look like, or even the appearance of their parks, suggests a Texas A&M recreation and parks professor.

"One viable alternative might be for us to change our perceptions of what our lawns or parks should look like by using other types of ground cover, trees and shrubs that withstand reduced amounts of water and require less maintenance," said Dr. Joanne Westphal.

The ornamental plants, trimmed hedges and mowed lawns that adorn many Texas parks are costly, Westphal said, "and as government funds for running park systems dwindle while the need to conserve water and energy increases, it might be to our advantage to replace many of

these ornamental plants with plants that are native to Texas."

Through a project funded by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, a branch of the Texas A&M University System, Westphal is setting out to determine whether native plants could save dollars used for recreational and residential landscapes.

"Plants native to certain areas could require less maintenance and, more importantly, less water," she said.

Westphal said it is ironic that landscape architects are trained to use ornamental plants that usually are not native to a particular region and often require more care. Most parks and lawns are designed to be manicured, with well-clipped grass, plenty of color and a diversity of textural

qualities, she said.

"We're suffering from a hangover of the days when designers felt that parks must be artificially created to simulate ideal landscapes," she said. "It started back in the 1800s when designers like Frederic L. Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, who designed Central Park in New York City, promoted the concept of English landscapes across the United States."

The Texas A&M recreation and parks professor pointed out that during summer months many cities ration water to maintain pressure in pipelines in case of fire. Often, there is a shortage of water because the city's water system cannot handle the demand that residences place on utilities when it is hot.



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## Off-Campus Ags discuss bonfire, council elections

By NANCY FLOECK  
Battalion Staff

Election of apartment council presidents, bonfire and a Christmas formal were a few of the topics discussed Wednesday night at the Off-Campus Aggies' first fall meeting.

The purpose of area councils and council presidents is to generate interest in OCA activities, mediate between apartment managers and residents and organize social events, OCA Secretary Rhonda Rhea said.

Off-campus students can file for presidential candidacy of their apartment complex — or their area, if they don't live in a complex or live in a sparsely populated one — Sept. 14 to 18. Elections are Sept. 23 to 25.

The only requirements are a 2.0 grade point ratio and a petition signed by 20 residents of the student's area. Freshmen must have a 2.0 GPA at midterm.

Bruce Martin, OCA vice president, told the group of about 200 that OCA's first major project, needs the help of off-campus students. He also urged them to provide information to other off-campus students. President Paul Bettencourt said, "We're going to try and come out in a way never done before."

Rhea said OCA would like to have a formal in late November or early December, as well as parties, street dances and apartment mixers throughout the semester. Treasurer Melissa Montgomery added, "We don't have to do it in dorms."

In the treasury report, Montgomery said OCA has \$864.99 in its regular account and will get about \$2,700 later this month from MSC bookstore profits.

The officers urged participation in OCA activities saying it can help off-campus students feel less left-out and give them some influence over their living conditions.

## Club Howdy Mixer today

The Texas A&M Parks and Recreation club is sponsoring a Howdy Mixer today.

It will be held from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Hensel Park, which is located on South College Avenue.

The mixer is open to students,

faculty, staff and the general public. There will be plenty of outside games, such as frisbee and volleyball. Music for dancing will be provided by a sound system.

Refreshments will be served and admission is free.

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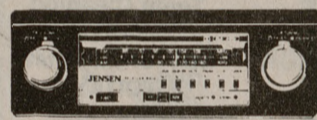
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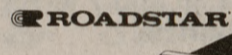
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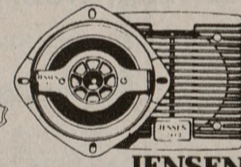
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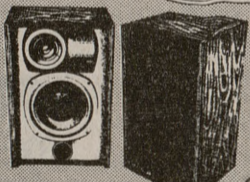
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