



A CONSERVATION NOTEBOOK

by Homer Stevens

Land Stewardship – Bur Oaks

It would be easy to belabor the idea of stocking rates (livestock carrying capacities) by writing on the same subject time after time. However, another aspect of Land Stewardship that is very related but has other ramifications is Water. Our state has recognized the importance of this commodity for years, and one of the results has been the Region J Water Planning Commission. Each year a revised version of the plan is published and made available to the members of the committee. This document appears to be at least two reams of paper thick and the script is front and back making it over 300 pages. Relating to this engineering study should provide material for as many notes as can be written.

A specific insert relating to the city of Bandera reads “ City of Bandera Well No. 69-24-202 shows a consistent decline from the 1950s through the 1990s, with a total of approximately 400 feet of water level decline. Most of the water withdrawn by Bandera public supply wells is produced from the Lower Trinity (Hosston) which receives very little vertical recharge and an undetermined amount of lateral underflow from the north and west of the well fields. Because of the continuous water-level decline in these well fields, the City should monitor levels to anticipate production reductions.”

An earlier article written regarding wells here on The Farm outlined similar declines in each of the three shallower aquifers. This reference from the Region J Plan simply emphasizes the condition of the water supply sources throughout the Hill Country. It appears that by drilling deeper wells more water may be available but recharge is slower, and as the supply is depleted more pipe and bigger pumps will be necessary. Since so much of the activity related to water use is currently under individual direction through the use of private wells, it is imperative that individuals become educated regarding the situation. Which scenario is scarier-- expecting individuals to acknowledge facts and do

right by conserving or government control?

Another goal of this set of notes is to point out some of the best options for landscape planting so let's consider the very popular shade tree Bur Oak. According to Sally and Andy Wasowski in their “Native Texas Plants” “This wonderful oak appears to grow anywhere in the state. Bur Oak is drought-resistant, long lived, and reasonably fast growing for an oak.”

Howard Garrett in his “Texas Trees” “ It is probably my favorite shade tree and should be planted on any site where there is enough room.”

Here on The Farm there are two beautiful specimens in front of the pavilion. These were planted in the spring of 1991 as 6” bare root presents from the Bandera Electric Co-op. They are now over 60’ and truly attractive. Although both have done extremely well there are very noticeable distinctive differences. One has much darker leaves and bark than the other. This is not surprising since nothing is known about the parents of most plants grown from seed under natural conditions. However, this seems to be an unusually pronounced trend in the Bur Oak species.

Other plants in the same area appear to exhibit more variation than most other species. This characteristic has been observed by several folks that have made multiple plantings of these trees. Perhaps (just a guess) the huge acorns contain more genetic material than others of the same family. One last point of fact is to not plant Bur Oaks where the limbs will extend over a roof. The acorns are golf ball size. It's not a good idea to park cars under them when the acorns are falling.

