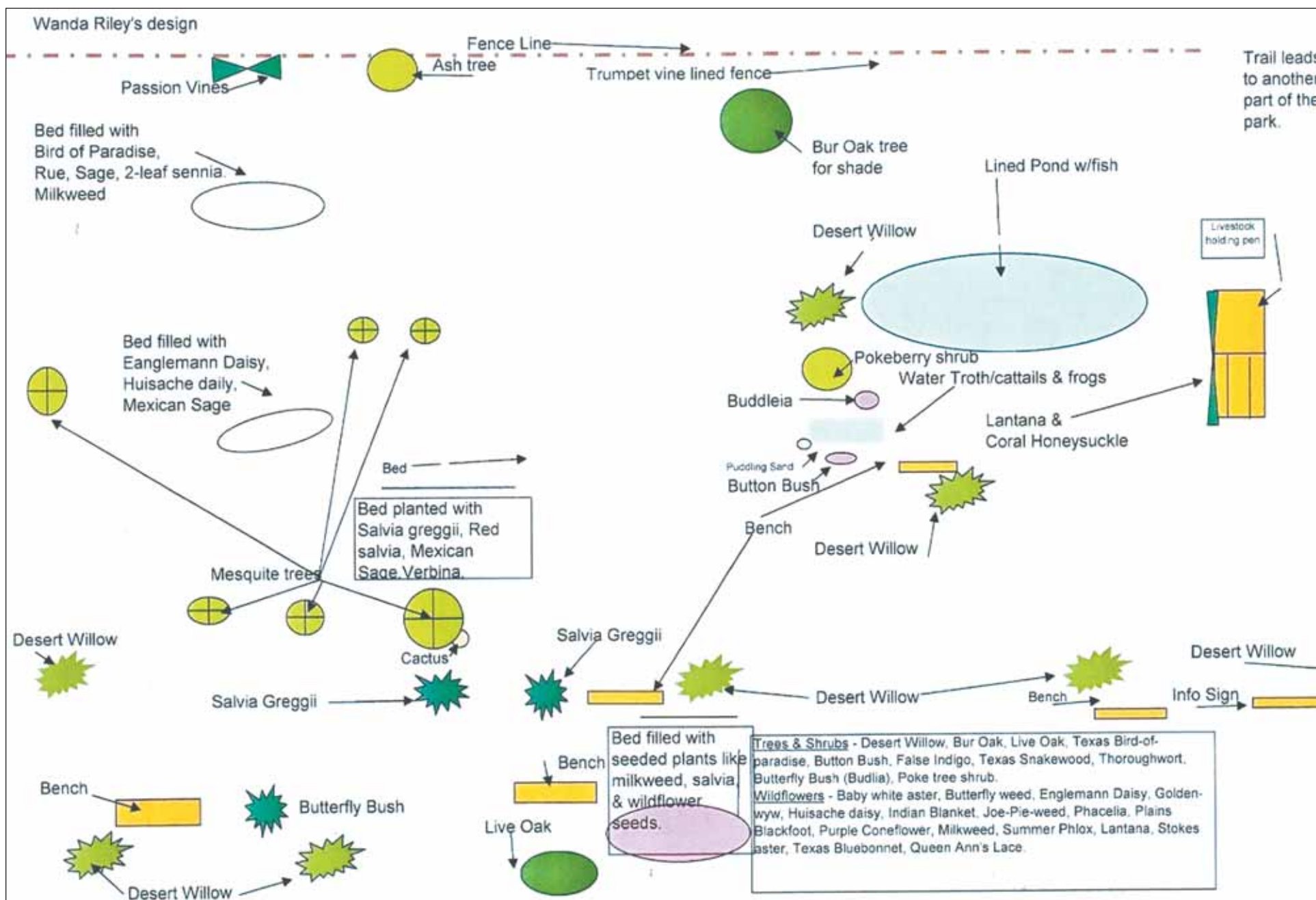
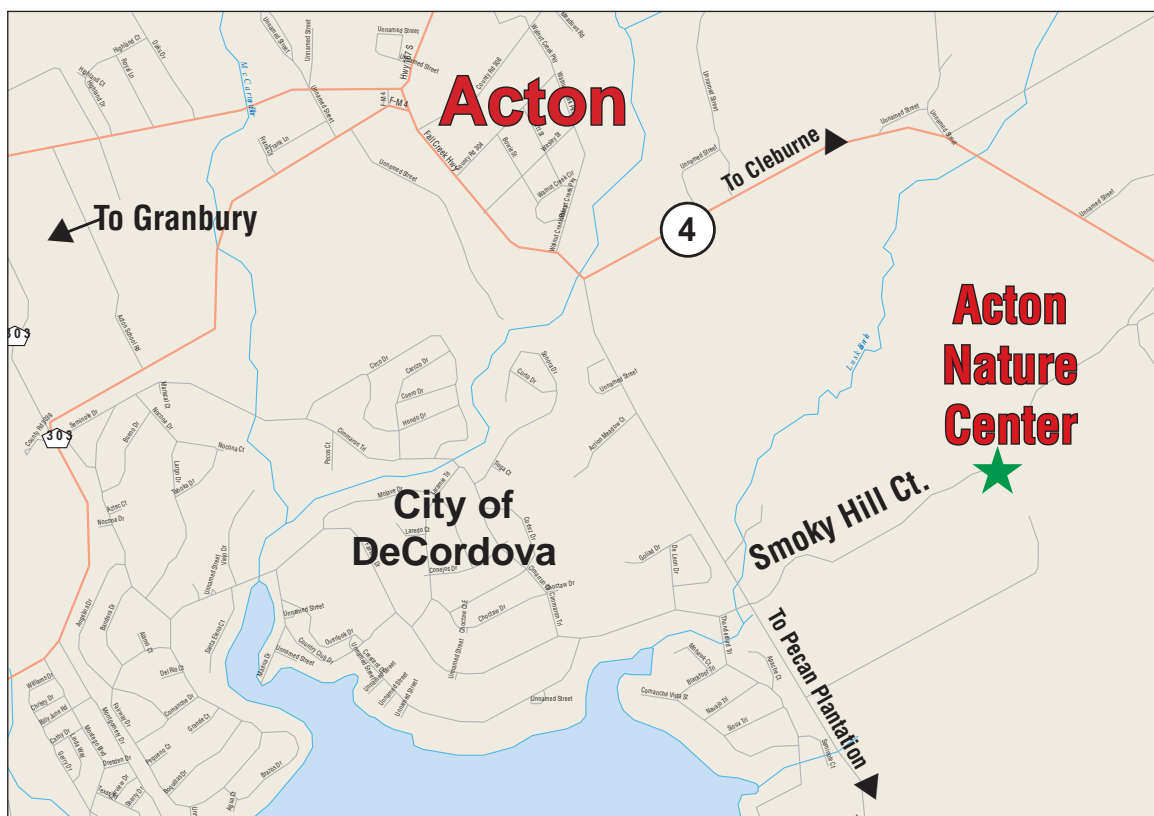


Nature

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Preliminary design of the Acton Nature Center of Hood County, located on top of Smoky Hill Court off Fall Creek Highway



Cullen Crisp, proprietor of Fall Creek Farms and president of Friends of the Acton Nature Center, gazes into a creek bed from Sam Houston Bridge, recently constructed to connect Nature Center trails

ESCAPE TO NATURE

by PETE KENDALL
Staff Writer

The mission statement is simple. "To take care of this native land and keep it native," Cullen Crisp noted.

Carrying out the mission statement won't be simple. It will take ample greenbacks and considerable continued hard work by volunteers to make the Acton Nature Center of Hood County a full-blown area attraction.

It's definitely a reality, though. Grand opening of the 74-acre facility, at the top of Smoky Hill Court off Fall Creek Highway, is Saturday, Oct. 6 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

There will be lectures and demonstrations involving reptiles,

raptors, beekeeping, rainwater harvesting and quilting. A bike trail trolley will be offered, as will a wildlife viewing facility constructed by Eagle Scouts.

A popular attraction is sure to be a massive ash juniper, deemed one of the state's largest by the Texas Champion

Go wild when Acton Nature Center opens to the public Oct. 6

Tree group; a century-old windmill; ponds; and numerous varieties of plants and flowers.

All trails and sub-trails are expected to be open.

"The public is invited," Crisp said. "We'll supply the trail mix and water. All we ask is that people follow the rules of the trails, which will be posted at the

front gate. All the trails will be marked, and most of the hiking trail is mulched.

"People need to wear shoes, no flip-flops. They should be aware that this is native grassland and comes with native animals, reptiles and insects."

You might, or might not, observe

a deer or rattlesnake. You're almost certain to see signs of feral hogs ... if not the porkers themselves.

"We've got stinkin' hogs," Crisp said with a chuckle. "We laid down a granite trail, and they're helping dig up the granite. We put in some culverts, and they're helping themselves to destroying the culverts."

"We're in the process of trapping the hogs, but they're pretty smart. They go around the trap. We don't want to kill them. We're in a relocation program."

The Nature Center was born in 2004 when Hood County Development District I took advantage of the Federal Lands to Parks program offered by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

In 2005, a parks committee was formed to report directly to HCDD I.

Crisp became president of Friends of the Nature Center in early summer. Much volunteer work had already been accomplished.

"We've got a lot of good momentum going," he said. "We've added the granite trail that we're going to call (Please see NATURE, P. 2B)