

Experts at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center of The University of Texas at Austin

For help with interviews, contact:

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Susan K. Rieff, Executive Director
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Expertise: Environmental policy; sustainable natural resources policy and management; public lands and land conservation.

Rieff is an expert in sustainability and resource protection with 30 years of experience directing major policy initiatives in Texas and nationally. In 2004, she became executive director of the Wildflower Center. She led the center's transition from a non-profit organization to a research unit of The University of Texas at Austin in 2006 and spearheaded its growing recognition as a national leader in landscape sustainability and plant conservation. Rieff previously was policy director for land stewardship for the National Wildlife Federation, the nation's largest member-supported conservation group. She also served as deputy chief of staff for the U.S. Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C., where she directed the establishment of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument following its presidential designation in 1997. From 1991 to 1995, Rieff served Gov. Ann Richards as policy council director and director of environmental policy. As legislative assistant to U.S. Senator Dale Bumpers for environmental and natural resources legislation, she helped secure protection of wilderness areas in Arkansas and fair-market returns for public resources. A graduate of Texas Christian University with a B.S. degree in environmental sciences, she has a master's degree from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin, and has taught environmental policy courses there.



Andrea DeLong-Amaya, Director of Horticulture
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Expertise: Native plant gardening; garden design; children's gardening; gardening for wildlife; botany

DeLong-Amaya manages the center's gardens and greenhouses and is passionate about sharing the value of native plants in planned landscapes. A staff member since 1998, she taps into more than 15 years of experience to guide the design and maintenance of the gardens by six staff members, and teaches classes in native plant horticulture. She oversees the master plan for the gardens, currently focused on creating a 4.5 acre children's garden that incorporates environmentally sustainable landscaping approaches. She writes how-to articles on gardening regularly for Neil Sperry's electronic newsletter, *e-gardens*, and has contributed to his *Gardens* magazine, as well as *Fine Gardening* and *Public Garden*. She received a bachelor's in geography from The University of Texas at Austin and served as a vice president for the Native Plant Society of Texas for two years.



Micheal Eason, Conservation Program Manager

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Expertise: Botany; native plant conservation

Eason is a botanist who directs the Texas activities of the international Millennium Seed Bank Project, which stockpiled seeds from 10 percent of the world's wild flowering species in 2010. He has trained over 150 Texas volunteers to identify native plants and collect seeds for this project during his seven years at the Center. While traveling nine months a year to collect seeds for the ongoing project, he has become an expert on native Texas landscapes. He has performed hundreds of botanical surveys across the state – from the Pineywoods of East Texas to the mountains and deserts of the Trans-Pecos down into the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas.



Florence Oxley, M.S., Director of Plant Conservation

512.232.0160

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Expertise: Native plant education; botany, native plant research; endangered plants; native plant conservation

Oxley oversees projects to conserve Texas' native plants and to provide hands-on learning experiences for school groups and others, including training educators to work with children in developing gardens in national parks. A long-time staff member, Oxley has extensive expertise in developing ecology lessons for the public, in the botanical history of Texas and in the conservation of native plants. She has published research on the reproductive habits of the first plant species listed under the Endangered Species Act. That research on Texas wild rice is part of her doctoral studies in aquatic resources at Texas State University.



Dr. Mark Simmons, Director of Research and Consulting

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

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Expertise: Ecology, environmental sustainability; designing landscapes with native plants, including novel settings

Simmons uses an ecological approach to develop sustainable solutions to environmental problems. He has studied grasslands on three continents, and applies what he has learned to developing a native lawn alternative to the high-maintenance grasses typically used on American lawns. He also researches how to control invasive species that threaten native plant species, the use of native vegetation for green roofs, and the role of urban greenspaces to combat climate change. Simmons serves on the technical advisory committee for the Clinton Climate Initiative of the William Clinton

Foundation, which works with governments and businesses to address climate change. And he participates in Wildflower Center consulting projects that include the re-vegetation of 8 miles of the San Antonio River south of downtown, connecting four historic Spanish missions, and park design at Austin's Mueller redevelopment project.



Dr. Damon Waitt, Senior Director

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Expertise: Botany; online native plant resources; addressing non-native (invasive) plants

Waitt holds a doctorate in botany from The University of Texas in Austin where he studied the evolution and ecology of *Drummond's Phlox*. He serves as the Wildflower Center's botanical authority. He uses his extensive experience developing web-based resources as director of the Center's Native Plant Information

Network, the largest online database about native plants in North America. He also tracks how harmful plants and animals threaten those that are native to Texas and other states while serving on the Invasive Species Advisory Committee for the National Invasive Species Council. Actively involved in establishing tools for tracking non-native plants in Texas, he is past president of the Texas Invasive Plant and Pest Council and is the chair of the National Association of Exotic Pest Plant Councils.

