



Arbor Hills is a natural respite with three distinct ecoregions:

1. Blackland Prairie - Appearing from Beneath

Prairies contain large expanses of grasses and wildflowers with few trees. This region is called the Blackland Prairie because of the black clay soil. Early settlers to our area encountered many miles of prairie, which were later disturbed by farming, ranching and building cities. The prairie areas at Arbor Hills are being restored by mowing, controlled burning, and seeding.

The most common plants of the prairie are grasses, and the dominant grass is little bluestem. In late spring the prairie blooms with an abundance of wildflowers. Bluebonnet (our state flower), Indian blanket, winecup, horsemint, and many types of yellow daisies bloom here at Arbor Hills. Birds of the Blackland Prairie include killdeer, scissor-tailed flycatcher, and turkey vulture.

2. Riparian Forest - Tangled and Growing

Riparian Forests grow along a creek or river. The word riparian comes from the Latin word for river. The tangle of trees, shrub and vines growing thickly along the creeks at Arbor Hills can create the feeling of a jungle. A wide variety of trees including the majestic Bur Oak and Red Oak are found here. Poison ivy and other vines climb the trees, and willows even grow in the creek. Owls and woodpeckers inhabit the trees, and water birds such as egrets and herons look for fish in the creek. The two branches of Indian Creek are home to turtles, snakes, fish and many insects.

3. Upland Forest - Unusual Location

The Upland Forest is found at higher elevations in the park and at a distance from the creeks. The Upland Forest at Arbor Hills Nature Preserve is unusual because of most of the forested areas in our region are found along waterways. Cedar elm is the most common shade tree in this area. Small flowering trees such as redbud and Eve's Necklace bloom in the spring. The cool shade and relatively open forest floor make the Upland Forest a pleasant area for walking on hot days. The hooting of an owl or the rustle of leaves as a rabbit runs away can be heard if you walk quietly. Coyotes and bobcats still roam the Upland Forest, but are rarely seen. (excerpts from the Arbor Hills Nature Preserve Park Information and Interpretive Trail Guide)