

Nature Notes

February 27, 2020

A digital journal documenting the search for truth, beauty and goodness in God's lovely creation throughout the diocese of Fort Worth.

I notice

The buds from last week's mystery plant started to bloom! Based on some internet research, and Mr. Cox's plant wisdom, I think this is a [Mexican Plum](#). After seeing more images online, we are in for a treat as spring progresses, this little tree will be full of sweet-smelling flowers. Mexican plum and Eastern Redbud are two of the first trees to bloom in Texas. Have you noticed either in your neighborhood? True to their name, redbuds have a pink bloom, and they sprout all along the branches (as compared to the plum shown here, where the flowers bloom in clusters).



Mexican Plum blossoms



Old oak leaves and new buds

I wonder. . . .

Why do some of our oak trees still cling to their dead leaves? Nearly all traces of fall leaves have either blown away, or gently broken down into a mulch bed on the ground, yet these oaks still have branches covered in dead leaves. This phenomenon is called [marescence](#), and it's a mystery to scientists as well. Holding on to leaves may provide [adaptive benefits](#). Leaves falling in the spring provide trees with their own mulch during the growing season, possibly giving them a competitive edge with access to more nutrients. Some scientists think the leaves help the trees hold onto snow longer, providing water early in the growing season as the snow melts. Finally, keeping unappetizing brown leaves on the tree may discourage browsing animals like deer, and help to hide the

