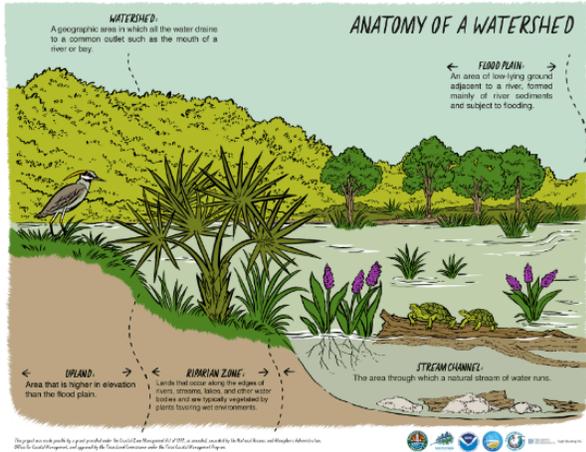
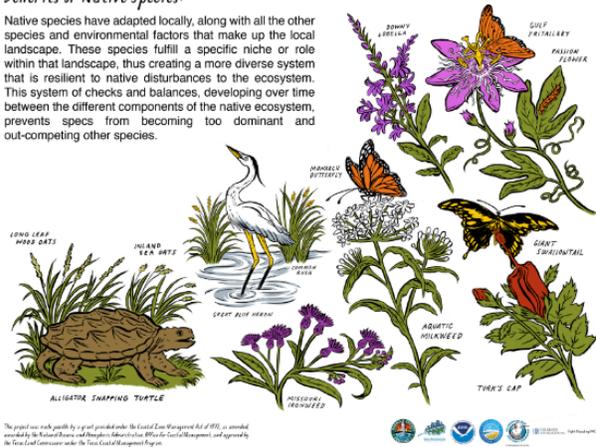


BPA ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Benefits of Native Species:

Native species have adapted locally, along with all the other species and environmental factors that make up the local landscape. These species fulfill a specific niche or role within that landscape, thus creating a more diverse system that is resilient to native disturbances to the ecosystem. This system of checks and balances, developing over time between the different components of the native ecosystem, prevents species from becoming too dominant and out-competing other species.



Bayou Preservation Association has partnered with Harris County to restore riparian habitat in Challenger Seven Memorial park over the past several years. This park offers an amazing opportunity to experience a native riparian habitat that has been largely cleared of invasive species and provides opportunities for hiking and wildlife spotting. As part of the project, Bayou Preservation Association has recognized the need to educate park users on the importance of riparian areas and the threat of invasive species. To that end, Bayou Preservation Association has hired local artist Sarah Welch to help create beautiful, informative, and engaging signs to provide this valuable context to visitors.

MEET SARAH WELCH



Sarah Welch is an artist, illustrator, and comics-maker in Houston, Texas. She is part of the printmaking duo Mystic Multiples and is a past organizer for the literary & visual arts organization Zine Fest Houston. Welch has participated in artist residency and study programs at Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, MacDowell, and Wesleyan University. Welch has exhibited throughout the US Gulf Coast, including exhibitions at Lawndale Art Center in

Houston, Antenna in New Orleans, and the Museum of Fine Arts at Florida State University in Tallahassee. She is a recipient of grants and support from The Pollock-Krasner Foundation, The Arch and Anne Giles Kimbrough Fund Award (Dallas Museum of Art), The Houston Arts Alliance, and The Idea Fund (The Andy Warhol Foundation). Welch's work is included in the City of Houston art collection on display at IAH Airport.

Q: How did you develop your artistic style?

A: Many years of trial and error!

Q: What drew you to focus heavily on nature in your artwork?

A: My family is originally from the Texas Gulf Coast, but I moved to Chicago for school in the mid-2000s. When I moved back to Texas in 2011, I became aware in a new way of the extreme climatic and ecological differences in Houston compared to other parts of the US. I also had new eyes on our region's precarious position regarding environmental threats like refineries and oil and gas infrastructure along the coast. This intersection between the built environment and nature became a pretty central theme in my art.

Q: What made you want to work with Bayou Preservation Association?

A: The mission of Bayou Preservation Association to protect waterways in our region speaks to my own values. Preserving the health of water is essential not only for the environment but for the health of the people who live here. "Health is Wealth!"

Q: What can you tell us about your process? How do you decide where the line of reality vs. Illustration and creativity will land in your work?

A: When I illustrate flora and fauna, I find details specific to that plant or animal that makes it unique and help us identify what we're looking at. For example, I love the specific leaf shape on the passion flower vine. The leaf is something I want to capture accurately, but the spacing of the leaves, the movement of the vine, I think it's open to artistic license, and I'm making choices based on visual composition more than accuracy.

Q: How can people keep up with you and your work?

A: sarahwelch.info, mysticmultiples.com, and you can find me on Instagram @welch_wich