

THIS WEEK ON THE LLANO ESTACADO

September 21-25, 2009



Mediterranean geckos arrived in Midland in the 1980's in plants sold by local nurseries that were purchased at wholesale growers near Houston.

Despite being killed by hard freezes the species has managed to survive by finding cracks in the walls of houses and wintering inside the walls.

They are harmless, and eat many species of bugs.

Geckos are nocturnal and are often seen on windows at night, catching moths and other insects attracted by the lights. Like all lizards, this one will regrow its tail after losing it to a predator. The geckos can climb on windows because their toes have thousands of tiny hairs that can find the tiniest imperfections in glass. They have not displaced any native species of reptile, because they only can survive in "the urban forest," not out in the pastureland filled with mesquite.

Challenge for teachers and students; Find out if any geckos live at school. During the day they can be found sleeping under objects on the ground. They are easy to keep in captivity, surviving on a diet of small crickets, and placed in a terrarium with moist potting soil. Capture other insects and bring them to school to see which invertebrate seems to be their favorite food.