Community Gardens and Development

Whether it’s research in plants, turfgrass, garden design, local foods or ornamental crops, K-State faculty are nationally and internationally known for their work in plants and gardens. This newsletter focuses on how different types of gardens – flower gardens, vegetable gardens and rain gardens – help build community.

A Message on Community Gardens from David Procter, Director of K-State’s Center for Engagement and Community Development

Research has found that community gardens can lead to the beautification and greening of many neighborhoods and can foster a spirit of community cooperation. Specifically, community elements such as improved health and welfare, food production, green space management, economic development, education, job development, recreation and tourism are all positively associated with the operation of community gardens. Design and construction of gardens also increases community-building capacity by developing and strengthening local partnerships.

This issue of our Engagement E-News features four stories of engaged partnerships building community gardens and the community-building roles they serve. The stories range from an elementary school learning garden to gardens that enhance the beauty of our local towns to gardens that promote nutrition and exercise to a garden at a local zoo that helps reduce water run-off and enhances habitat for butterflies and bees. We hope you enjoy this issue of Engagement E-News. Please feel free to contact us any time and continue to check out our website for many other examples of engaged campus and community partnerships: www.k-state.edu/cecd.
Northview Promotes Hands-on Experience with Gardening

by Alexa Hodes

The Northview Learning Garden gives children a hands-on experience with nature. Although schoolyard gardens are not new, they are not commonplace throughout Kansas. The Learning Garden at Northview Elementary School is more than a place to grow plants and vegetables. The ‘outdoor classroom’ allows teachers to lead their K-6 curriculum outside, conducting art projects and science lessons. With native plants and stones of the Flint Hills eco-region, students will gain knowledge and be grateful for a ‘sense of place’ in the Flint Hills.

“My goal, as the designer, is to assist the school and community stakeholders to create a garden that answers the needs of a Manhattan elementary school,” says project coordinator, Katie Kingery-Page, assistant professor of landscape architecture/regional and community planning, “I share their goal of creating a place of beauty that will raise kids’ awareness of and connection to nature.”

The primary partners for the learning garden are Northview Elementary School’s principal Shelley Aistrup, 3rd grade teacher Ron Donoho, PTO co-president Dan McGee, UFM director Linda Teener, and Kansas State University.

“K-State’s involvement has occurred over several years and in many different ways. The Department of Landscape Architecture/Regional and Community Planning has led design and implementation of the garden. The Center for Engagement and Community Development has provided needed financial support for implementation and maintenance. The Department of Horticulture and Forestry and Recreation Resources and K-State Research and Extension assisted the school in early planning of the garden and continue to be a resource,” says Kingery-Page. Many others have also helped support the Northview Learning Garden as well.

The Northview schoolyard has been a popular place for community members to take a stroll. This open space is often used every day of the week. Kingery-Page said, “I hope it will be a source of pride...I hope it will become another destination on strolls through the Northview park and school grounds.”

Improving the Quality of Life: One Color at a Time

by Alexa Hodes

The “Our Community . . . A More Colorful Place” program seeks to develop a sense of pride in our hometowns through the planting of bright, colorful annual flowers.

“Think of any community in Kansas during the December holiday season. They are all decorated with bright colorful holiday decorations – downtown, businesses and front yards. Our quality of life is better when we decorate for the December holidays. Why not also decorate with displays of bright annual flowers through the spring, summer and fall seasons?” asks director of the program, Alan Stevens, associate professor of ornamental crops.

Displaying colorful flowers downtown, in front of businesses and in people’s front yards becomes a source of pride and improves the appearance of the community. Planting flowers is a great way for people to take part in community development.

“It is a community program designed to improve the quality of life in the community. We don’t put holiday decorations in our backyard – we place them in the front for the neighbors and community at large to enjoy. So why not spots of bright colorful flowers for everyone to enjoy?” asks Stevens.

The main sponsor of the “Our Community...A More Colorful Place,” program is the Kansas PRIDE Program. “A large number of communities across the state are planting flowers in their downtown areas. Businesses are increasingly planting flowers in pots and planters near their front entrances.
Throughout the state of Kansas, low impact development (LID) and storm-water best management practices (BMPs) have had limited testing. The Sunset Zoo Kansas Plains Area Prairie and Rain Garden allows students and faculty to gain experience in the planning and design of dynamic ecological systems in an urban setting.

“The Sunset Zoo Kansas Plains Area Prairie and Rain Gardens collect and infiltrate storm-water runoff on sloping land within the Kansas Plains portion of the Sunset Zoo, showing visitors simple ways to help reduce storm-water runoff and maintain wildlife, especially for butterflies and bees,” explains Lee R. Skabelund, ASLA, assistant professor, K-State Department of Landscape Architecture / Regional & Community Planning.

This demonstration garden was designed by K-State landscape architecture students (with conceptual plan and plant lists prepared by Emily King and Lee Adams in Professor Skabelund’s fall 2008 planting design studio). Chris Enroth and Andy Schaap, students in Skabelund’s spring 2009 advanced planting design course assisted him in executing the garden in March 2009 with Skabelund and Enroth completing the project in June 2009. Assistance was given from a number of K-State and Manhattan High School students as well as Master Gardener Greg Eyestone and Sunset Zoo staff (including Director Scott Shoemaker and maintenance personnel).

“Our main goal is to demonstrate simple and cost-effective ways to make a difference in protecting streams and other aquatic ecosystems by slowing, holding, and infiltrating storm-water runoff in gardens that are designed and implemented to fit with their eco-regional and site specific contexts,” explains Skabelund.

The benefits of the Sunset Zoo Kansas Plains Area Prairie and Rain Gardens are “increased understanding of what different storm-water BMPs look like, how they function, and what it takes to maintain these systems given the flows of water, materials, animals, people and propagules/seeds into or through these features,” says Skabelund. Partners of the Sunset Zoo Kansas Plains Area Prairie and Rain Gardens are the Sunset Zoo staff and a number of K-State students, faculty, and staff. Presentations have been given about the gardens at more than half a dozen conferences. Workshops have also been conducted and a guidebook for designing and implementing rain gardens is available online.

Homeowners are beginning to realize that their front yards are ‘public gardens’ and are beginning to plant spots of colorful flowers in the yard and placing pots of flowers on their front porches,” says Professor Stevens.

Prairie and Rain Gardens Attract Wildlife at Sunset Zoo
by Alexa Hodes

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### Project PLANTS Encourages Healthy Habits for Kids

by Alexa Hodes

To promote a healthier lifestyle for children, Candice Shoemaker, associate professor of horticulture, forestry and recreation resources at Kansas State University, has been creating gardens and high tunnels for fourth and fifth graders in the Manhattan-Ogden Unified School District. Students learn to grow their own fruits, vegetables and flowers. This study is called Project PLANTS (Promoting Lifelong Activity and Nutrition Through Schools).

Hoping to promote a healthier lifestyle, Shoemaker and colleagues say that when children grow their own fruits and vegetables, they are more attracted to eating them.

“One time, after a day of gardening with the students, all the kids had a bag of their own spinach. As they got into the cars with their parents, you could see them eating out of their bags. Their parents couldn’t believe we got their kids to eat spinach,” explains Shoemaker.

Gardening is also a great physical activity as well, and will get the kids off the couch and away from the television.

Shoemaker teaches how a garden can be a continuous activity. Previous research has shown that the care of school gardens are often a project that a teacher or two maintain, and once that care is no longer there, the garden fails. Shoemaker shows how to keep these gardens going long term, and hopes to create a model that schools can put into practice.

Partners of the Project PLANTS program include David Dzewaltowski, professor of kinesiology; Ted Carey, professor of horticulture, forestry and recreation resources; and George Milliken, professor of statistics, the Riley County Extension Office and Manhattan-Ogden School District.

### UPCOMING EVENTS FOR CECD

### Community Development Academy

The Community Development Academy is a series of workshops that will provide community leaders the assessment and strategic planning information necessary to devise participatory community development plans and strategies. Participants will gain the information, resources and processes needed to guide planning to create quality sustainable communities.

[www.k-state.edu/cecd/cda/](http://www.k-state.edu/cecd/cda/)

**February 24* & 25, 2010**  
**March 3 & 4, 2010**  
**March 10 & 11*, 2010**  
*indicates dates for community coaches only

**Academy sessions will be held at:**  
Memorial Hall  
410 N Penn Ave.  
Independence, KS

### Issues Forums

- Coping with the Cost of Health Care: How do we pay for what we need?  
- Wednesday, November 4, 7:00-9:00 p.m.  
- Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum in Abilene, Kansas

- Regaining American Prosperity: Building an economy that works for everyone.  
- Tuesday, November 17, 7:00-9:00 p.m.  
- Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum in Abilene, Kansas

### Health Colloquium

Engaging Health, Changing Lives  
- Thursday, October 29, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.  
- K-State Student Union, Flint Hills Room

*All are welcome! Free admission.
Workshop highlights:

- How to set up public forums
- The role of the facilitator
- Best practices for facilitators
- Evaluating public issue forums
- Participation in different forms of public conversation
- Individual practice/coaching sessions

CECD Mission & Vision

To promote engagement across the breadth of Kansas State University - in teaching, research, and outreach - and to connect the vast resources of KSU to the significant issues of public need facing Kansas and communities worldwide.

Engagement occurs when collaborative partners — both on and off-campus stakeholders — work together to address a public need in a way that is both reciprocal and mutually beneficial. Through engagement, K-State endeavors to fulfill its historic land grant mission.

– David E. Procter, CECD director