

Dyck Arboretum of the Plains

# PrairieWindow

to promote through education and stewardship, the conservation and use of plants native and adaptable to Kansas



Summer 2016 Vol. 26 No 2

## Thirty-five Years Connecting People to the Prairie

by Brad Guhr, Education Coordinator

The Dyck Arboretum of the Plains turns thirty-five years old this fall. On October 10, 1981, Harold and Elva Mae Dyck directed the first bur oak tree to be planted near what is now our parking lot. The Dycks had a vision that the Arboretum would encourage a greater understanding and appreciation of the simple beauty of Kansas wildflowers, grasses, trees, and shrubs. Simply put, they had a Kansas land ethic, and wanted to share it with others.

Arboretum staff and board members are planning a year-long series of events to celebrate the anniversary of that vision. A fitting focus for these events is found in the landmark American conservation book *A Sand County Almanac*. Written by wildlife biologist/ecologist, Aldo Leopold, in the 1940s, this book is a series of essays based on plant and wildlife observations throughout the year. Leopold wrote eloquently in these essays about the ecological restoration of land on his farm in Sauk Co., Wisconsin. In the concluding chapter, "A Land Ethic", Leopold reflects how conservation is a state of harmony between people and the land.

In the coming year, we will explore many interesting connections between Leopold's writings and what we do in carrying out Harold and Evie's legacy focused on connecting people to the prairie. Collaborative readings of *A Sand County Almanac*, viewings of the award-winning Leopold documentary *Green Fire*, prairie-related plant and wildlife field trips at Dyck Arboretum and nearby destinations in Kansas, classes to construct wildlife viewing Leopold benches and prairie-themed bird baths, prairie landscaping classes, our Winter Lecture Series, and a spring symposium are all being planned to help us explore our Kansas land ethic.

More event details will be provided on our website soon. We hope you will be participating with us in this rich celebration.



*Arboretum co-founder, Elva Mae Dyck, views the newly constructed Visitor and Education Center in the fall of 1999 from her favorite spot on the Arboretum grounds, fondly referred to as "Evie's Overlook" by friends, family, staff and board members.*

## Discover the Flint Hills with the Director Tuesday, September 27

One summer, the arboretum staff took a day trip through the Flint Hills. It was a wonderful experience that we are going to repeat for you to enjoy.

We will meet at the Arboretum and journey north with a scenic drive through the heart of the Flint Hills in all their fall splendor. Our first stop will be at the Flint Hills Discovery Center in Manhattan. This facility pays tribute to the rich history of the Flint Hills and the importance of saving the largest remaining tract of tallgrass prairie in the United States.

We will continue to Nelson's Landing (restaurant owned by Jordy Nelson's family who plays for the Green Bay Packers) in Leonardville, KS, home of famous chicken fried steak and amazing homemade pies. After lunch, we will trek back to Manhattan on our way back home along the Flint Hills National Scenic Byway K-177 Highway from Council Grove to Strong City.

You know Scott, he may even have some random stops along the way showing some of his favorite areas. Leave the Dyck Arboretum at 8 a.m. and return around 6 p.m. \$40 members/\$50 for non-members will cover the entire trip except lunch. RSVP by Friday, September 23.

# Ten Years of Kansas Earth Partnership for Schools

by Brad Guhr, Education Coordinator

Our milestone tenth annual Earth Partnership for Schools (EPS) Summer Institute June 6-10 at Dyck Arboretum was our largest ever. We hosted 31 educators from organizations and schools including Buckner Magnet Elementary, Cooper Early Childhood, Derby Public, Discovery Intermediate, Dodge Literacy Magnet, Erie-Galesburg Public, Haven/Yoder Charter, Hesston Elementary, Maize High, Pilgrim Christian, Reno Co. KSU Extension, Slate Creek Elementary, St. Mary Catholic, Stafford Middle, Stucky Middle, and Walton Rural Life Center.

These educators learned about prairie botany, entomology and ecology, basics of creating and maintaining prairie pocket gardens, studied the macro and micro scales of the prairie, pulled weeds, made art, wrote reflectively, developed skits, learned nature-based math, ate delicious food, and put themselves in the shoes of their students for a week. They practiced dozens of creative EPS curriculum activities based on science inquiry and project-based learning. They also wrote a grant proposal and action plan to help them develop a natural schoolyard laboratory where they will engage their students in fun ways of learning hands-on environmental education.

I really enjoy coordinating and teaching Kansas EPS, because I have learned that it consistently attracts energetic, positive, inquisitive and creative teachers. One would easily understand then why working with these teachers and conducting this annual summer workshop is so rewarding.

Post-institute reflections from teachers confirm that the EPS experience resonates with them as well:

“There is a reason that this last week was so refreshing. It makes sense that when we neglect the natural world, our souls suffer. We were made to live in close relationship with the world around us. As a teacher (and parent!) I want to do a better job of training and encouraging this in my students. There were so many practical things I learned this week that I will take back to my classroom, but perhaps the most important is to just get outside. Training our kids to see what is around them, to know the species of animals and plants, to hear the sound of birds

and trees and insects, and to find joy in all of that--I'd say that's a great start. At the very least, it will excite their senses, focus their attention, and instill greater curiosity.”

-Kendall Smith, K-4 Science Teacher - Walton Rural Life Center

“One thing I am aspiring to do this next year in my biology classes is to get ‘back to nature’. I want to make sure that I allow the students to have real contact with nature. There are so many biological simulations and computer activities that it is often tempting to forget about the best teacher - nature. I want to make sure I have my students get their hands dirty while they experience nature and ecology right outside the door. Biology is the study of living things. I want to make sure I keep the living stuff in the forefront to inspire my students to love what is around them.”

-Frances Houseman, Biology Teacher - Maize High School

EPS is made possible this year through support from Kansas Health Foundation, The Citizens State Bank, Harvey County Farm Bureau Association, and Newton Kiwanis Club.



Top right: Investigating plant diversity. Bottom right: Making prairie-themed print quilts. Left: Measuring area of a simulation garden area with the “What’s A Square Foot” activity.



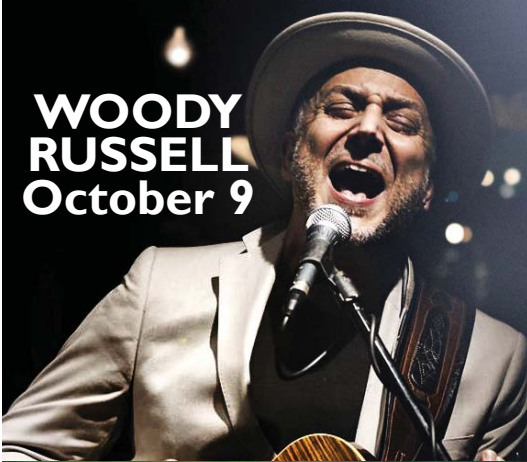


# Prairie Window Concert Series

Dyck Arboretum of the Plains, Hesston, KS

2016-17

**WOODY  
RUSSELL**  
October 9



**TIM O'BRIEN**  
October 21



**JOE CROOKSTON**  
November 6



**HARPETH RISING**  
December 4



Dyck   
Arboretum  
of the Plains

**LIZ  
LONGLEY**  
January 15



**MOLLY  
TUTTLE**  
February 12



**OLD MAN  
LUEDECKE**  
April 9



**THE STEEL  
WHEELS**  
May 6



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WICHITA PUBLIC RADIO



# Which Trees Should I Plant in Kansas?

by Scott Vogt, Executive Director/Horticulturist

If you live in Kansas long enough, you really begin to appreciate trees. They endure heat, extreme cold and persistent wind. Months without rain are common, but so is the occasional soaking rain that saturates the soil. Trees in this part of the world are a luxury but need to be resilient. Sitting under mature trees on a warm afternoon enjoying the blue skies and sipping a cool drink is a special experience.

Native trees are vital to the survival of wildlife, too. In his book *Bringing Nature Home*, Doug Tallamy found that one oak can grow 532 species of caterpillars that are eaten by birds and their young. He also found that alien ornamentals support 29 times less biodiversity than native plants. Obviously, if you love birds, you need to plant a diverse selection of native trees.

Trees can be an important element in your garden. In Kansas, the best time to plant trees and shrubs is in the late fall and early winter before the ground freezes. With proper watering and maintenance, newly-established plants will get acclimated to their new environment. By developing roots in the

fall, these plants will increase their chance of survival through the first growing season the following year.

The following is a list of trees recommended for eastern or central Kansas, but are adaptable to most of the state. These trees are “plains tough”. They are tenacious and able to withstand the rigors of the Kansas climate. Try a few of these:

**Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*)** – A very large, broad, spreading tree (70' x 70') with long, smooth-lobed leaves. Mature trees come alive in the fall with squirrel activity as the acorns mature. Excellent as a shade tree, but give it space.

**Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*)** A large tree (60' x 60') with a rounded growth habit in youth and maturity. The seven to eleven lobed, lustrous, dark green leaves turn a russet-red in fall.

**Shingle Oak (*Quercus imbricaria*)** – Pyramidal in youth and eventually becoming broad and rounded at maturity (50' x 50'). The leaves are unlobed and lustrous, dark green, turning yellow-brown to russet-red in fall. Leaves are persistent though winter.

**Post Oak (*Quercus stellata*)** – A dense, rounded tree (40' x 40') with shiny, green leaves that are roundly-lobed. Hard to find in the nursery trade, but worth the effort.

**American Linden, Basswood (*Tilia americana*)** – A very large (60' x 60'), upright, pyramidal to broadly-open tree. The gray smooth bark, fragrant creamy-yellow flowers in late spring, and dark green leaves make American Linden a nice choice as a shade tree.

**Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*)**

The native Sugar Maple develops into a large shade tree with a broad, spreading canopy. They have excellent fall color in shades of orange, yellow and red. Sugar Maples are quite adaptable to a variety of soil types but prefer rich, well-drained soil. (60' X 50')

**Catalpa (*Catalpa speciosa*)** – Very adaptable to a wide range of soils from wet to dry. It has an open, irregular crown (50' x 40') with large, heart-shaped leaves. The flowers, which appear in May and June, are quite showy. Worth growing, even though it is thought of as a messy tree that drops its leaves and seed pods. Don't all trees do that?

**Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)** – Tough, oval-rounded tree (40' x 35') with fragrant, white, blueberry-shaped flowers in May and June. The real treat comes in the fall when the edible fruit ripens and the foliage takes on colors of yellow to reddish-purple.

Establish some of these trees in your neighborhoods and landscapes to increase plant diversity. We have examples of many of these trees growing at the Arboretum. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about trees or native plants.

For a complete listing of trees available at the FloraKansas Fall Plant Sale, go to our website and look under Events/FloraKansas.

**Watch for tree coupons prior to the fall sale.**



A stately bur oak in winter: The first tree planted in the Arboretum on October 10, 1981 was a bur oak because they are tough, resilient and long-lived.

## Landscaping Classes Available in August

As we look at the natural world around us, we wonder how everything can work in such harmony while we struggle year-in and year-out to make our own landscapes work for us.

This fall's landscaping classes will focus on the balance between the beauty and function. By using natural models as examples for your landscape, you will be able to evaluate what you have and determine how your landscape can mimic Kansas ecosystems.

Join Scott Vogt as he takes you through the process of planning, designing, installing and maintaining a native landscape.

Come prepared with a scale drawing of your landscaping site. As part of this class, he will provide individual assistance with your plan on that day and will be available for follow-up questions as you complete your design.

Attendees will receive an additional coupon for either the 2016 fall plant sale or 2017 spring plant sale to purchase the plants from their design. Cost is \$20/person, \$15/Members. Come Saturday, August 20, 8:30-11 a.m. or Thursday, August 25 6:30-9 p.m. Call the Arboretum for reservations.

## FloraKansas Fall Plant Sale

Join us for the fall FloraKansas Plant Sale, Sept. 9-11. Our member sale is Thurs., Sept. 8, from 1 to 7 p.m. Members receive a 10% discount on all plant purchases. See our website for a full schedule and plant list. Members may email plant orders to us no later than Sept. 1st.

## Signs Enhance Visitor Experience

by Katie Schmidt, Horticulturist/Grounds Manager

In 2015, the Arboretum was granted funds from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust for educational signage to be installed at various locations on the grounds. Arboretum staff and board members sought this funding to help improve the visitor experience and to elevate the Arboretum from nature trail to natural museum.

Visitors can stop by the office and pick up a self-guided tour brochure, which includes a map of the grounds and an overview of the sign locations.

Installed this past May, these signs immediately began catching the eye of our regular visitors and engaging them with our plants and wildlife in new ways. With line drawings by Lorna Harder, text by the staff, and overall design by Flint Hills Design in North Newton, the signs are a collaborative project aimed at fulfilling the Arboretum mission by providing more environmental education opportunities to the public.

Each sign presents information pertaining to the region directly around

it; the bird watch area sign tells about how to create year-round bird habitat, the butterfly garden sign gives facts on pollinators, and so on.

Many of the signs pose questions to the reader, prompting us all to look carefully at our surroundings and think critically about plant adaptations, animal behavior and more.

With so much additional information for each area that we'd like to share with the public, each sign has a link to a specific page on our website where we will post expanded information and resources.

We hope that these learning stations will help highlight the purpose of each area of the Arboretum and enhance the visitor experience through education and exploration.

*These signs in the bird watch area (right) and by the Kansas Wildflower Exhibit (below) are two of ten new educational signs, interpreting for visitors the horticultural and wildlife habitat displays spread throughout the Arboretum grounds.*







## Cranes and Constellations

Saturday, November 5, 2:15 to 11 p.m.  
with Brad Guhr, Education Coordinator

Take advantage of this unique event that every Kansan should experience at least once in their lifetime - the fall migration of the abundant sandhill crane provides rich sounds and visuals through a sunset that you will never forget. And we will certainly be on the lookout for the federally endangered whooping crane too, which is known to populate the same migratory route.

Gregg Friesen will share his vast knowledge of many other migrating birds that pass through this smorgasbord rest stop at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. Round out the evening after dark with John Hobbs and be treated to his enthusiasm for the night sky. If the timing of migration and weather cooperate, this evening should prove to be a memorable one.



A box supper and coffee will be provided. The van will depart from the Arboretum at 2:30 p.m. and return by 11:00 p.m. The cost per participant is \$40 for members or \$45 for non-members and covers the entire trip (\$20 for children under 13). For reservations, call (620) 327-8127 by Thurs., November 3.

### Staff

Scott Vogt, Executive Director/  
Horticulturist  
Brad Guhr, Education/Prairie Restoration/  
Concert Series Coordinator  
Janelle Flory Schrock, Office Manager  
Katie Schmidt, Horticulturist /  
Grounds Manager

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