

# DYCK ARBORETUM OF THE PLAINS

# PRAIRIE

# WINDOW

*cultivating transformative relationships between people and the land*

Summer 2023 Vol. 33 No. 2

## What is a Garden's Purpose?

*by Kaitlin Schmidt, Horticulturist and Grounds Manager*

Our summer interns help pull weeds and trim trees, but they also help us by asking “why?”

Why did we cut it by hand instead of mowing? Why did we add mulch and leaves? Why do we maintain this garden different from the next one? The answers to these questions always center around priorities and purpose.

Is this a pollinator garden? Don't trim during peak caterpillar hatching time.

Are we hoping to encourage lightning bugs to nest here? Don't rake away the leaf litter.

Is the goal of this space to be symmetrical and tidy? Weed more frequently and stick closely to the

original design. Knowing the purpose of a space easily guides your decisions.

A traditionally landscaped American garden has one job: to look pretty. All future decisions serve that goal.

Heavy chemical use to maintain the green lawn? Yes, to preserve the aesthetic. Constant trimming of shrubs? Yes, to alter their natural shape. Overuse of water to keep non-native species green in a climate they did not evolve in? Of course. But this is not sustainable. It's an outdated and human-centric practice with consequences for our natural resources and ecosystem.

Everybody must decide for themselves, and for each unique space,

what the purpose and priorities are. Some of our members are looking to decrease water usage, but keep their landscaping looking very traditional. In this case we suggest highly structured designs using cultivated varieties of natives that don't spread or seed out, and are very drought tolerant. But for folks hoping to increase insect and bird habitat the advice is different: prioritize straight species, high diversity, dense planting and less structure.

There is no “one way” to successfully use native plants. Each new project must be planted with clear purpose in mind. Later on, remembering your original purpose and priorities will help keep you on track!



*Images by Janelle Flory Schrock*



*Left: Plantings at our neighboring retirement community make use of drought tolerant plants with a more traditional approach to design. Right: The Arboretum's island garden features an evolving prairie planting from seed. We manage this area with annual prescribed burns.*

# From the Director's Desk...

by Scott Vogt, Executive Director and Horticulturist



Summer in Kansas is often a season we have to endure. It's hot, windy, dry and relentless. It is seldom wet, but if you are fortunate enough to get some beneficial rain, you can thank your lucky stars. So summer is here once again, and I will try to make the best

of it by reflecting on the past and planning for the future.

Earlier this spring, a new memorial garden was constructed in the northwest corner of the Arboretum. This garden to honor the memory of Teresa Mullet has many important features that connect to her personally: a serpentine bench to sit and simply watch nature or visit with family and friends; a bur oak tree with branches spreading to provide shade and protection, and deep roots to anchor it to the land; and a meandering path that connects to the woodland walk, which resembles the prairie paths Teresa once walked with her family.

We often refer to a quote attributed to Audrey Hepburn, "To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."

We are so grateful to have this new garden here at the Arboretum. It has been and will be a project of great interest to all visitors. As it continues to develop, it will evolve and grow.



Janelle Flory Schrock

I am excited about another project slated to start later this summer - the paving of the entire Prairie Window Project path with concrete. The Prairie Window Project is the southern acreage of the Arboretum with larger tracts of reconstructed prairie dissected by gravel paths. Currently, the rocky path is uneven and gets weedy as the growing season progresses. A smooth ten foot wide path will make this area more accessible to all visitors. We look forward to completing this long term improvement to the grounds.

As I reflect on the past fiscal year, which ended on June 30, I am filled with gratitude for the support of so many people. I want to thank all of our members and donors who supported the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains this past year. We are thrilled to have finished the fiscal year in the black. Through your generous support, more and more people are discovering this prairie garden in Hesston, Kansas and connecting with our mission to "cultivate transformative relationships between people and the land". We will be good stewards of your investment in the Arboretum. The trust you have in us is not taken lightly.

Thank you again. I hope to see you in the gardens.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Vogt".



Gerald Leinbach

Left: A new memorial garden in the northwest corner of the Arboretum was installed this spring to remember Teresa Mullet. The garden features a serpentine bench, a memorial bur oak tree and a path connecting to the woodland walk. Right: As I mentioned in our last newsletter, a donor helped us replace the unsightly rubble at the western spillway with boulders and river rock.



# Kansas Teachers Restoring Bonds with Prairie

by Brad Guhr, Education Coordinator

The 16th Earth Partnership for Schools Summer Training Institute was a rich and engaging experience. Nineteen educators brought 217 years of teaching experience to Dyck Arboretum for a week of practicing hands-on EPS curriculum activities, learning how to landscape with native plants, developing action plans, writing grants, observing nature, making art, journaling, eating good food, reconnecting with the curiosity of their students, and awakening their passions for teaching. Our staff enjoyed developing bonds with these educators and we look forward to supporting them on their prairie gardening journeys with their students for years to come!



Images by Brad Guhr

## FALL FLORAKANSAS NATIVE PLANT DAYS

**Member Day:** Thursday, Sept. 7, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
**Public Sale:** Friday, Sept. 8, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
Saturday, Sept. 9, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Sunday, Sept. 10, 1 to 5 p.m.

**PRE-  
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Sept 1**



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## MEET OUR SUMMER INTERN!

I'm Claira Janssen. I'm from Beatrice, Nebraska and I'm currently a junior at Bethel College studying Natural Science. If you frequent the Arboretum, you've more than likely seen me weeding in gardens, doing odd jobs, or following Katie around. That's because I am the summer intern here at the Arboretum.



I chose to fill my summer with this internship because of my passion to protect the natural world, and my curiosity to learn more about my environment. I have a special interest in environmental education and wish to find a place of my own in that career field. I believe it is important to build environmental stewardship through education and motivate that stewardship with a love for the land. Through this internship, I hope to build connections that help me grow personally and professionally. If you see me around, feel free to stop me and say hello!

*If you or someone you know might be a good candidate for a Horticulture and Grounds Management Internship, please visit [dyckarboretum.org/internship](http://dyckarboretum.org/internship) for more information. The application period for our 2024 summer internship will open up in January.*

## Staff

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

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the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains is owned by

