

# DYCK ARBORETUM OF THE PLAINS PRAIRIE WINDOW

cultivating transformative relationships between people and the land

Summer 2024 Vol. 34 No. 2

## In celebration of a visionary woman

by Kaitlin Schmidt, Horticulturist and Grounds Manager and Janelle Flory Schrock, Public Engagement Coordinator

Elva Mae (Evie) Dyck was a visionary woman. Over the three decades that she and her husband Harold served as co-founders on the board of the Arboretum, it was largely her driving vision and appreciation of the Kansas landscape that shaped the development of this garden.

At Evie's celebration of life in April of 2013, former Arboretum director Julie Torseth shared that Evie's favorite native flower was Spiderwort. While it is an unassuming choice, common and not the showiest, it is a wonderful plant for many reasons.

Spiderwort (*Tradescantia sp.*) is hardy and reliable, growing in a wide variety of conditions across the state. Shorter species like *T. tharp* easily endure the full hot sun and dry soils of western Kansas while *T. ohioensis* thrives

in lush, tallgrass prairies of the east. The flowers open in the morning and close at night, bloom reliably all through May and early June. It has become a staple of our prairie gardens because of its easy maintenance and habit of spreading by seed.

The common name may originate from the sticky, viscous sap that flows from a stem once cut. This sap hardens into silky webs, giving the false impression that spiders are near! In fact you are much more likely to encounter bees and flies around this flower, as they are attracted to its nectar and pollen.

Found in prairies throughout the Great Plains, species of *Tradescantia* are long-lived perennials and enduring members of the prairie ecosystem. In spring, they are easy to spot in the crowd of plants, and their presence

heralds the approaching summer.

It seems fitting that this citizen of the prairie was a favorite of Evie's. Just as the first April blooms of Tharp's spiderwort always signal the coming of peak spring blooming, with other favorites like blue false indigo, penstemon and evening primrose, Evie's dream of a prairie garden in the late 1970s was ahead of its time. She helped lay the foundation for prairie conservation and habitat gardening to become mainstream in Kansas.

We will have several species of Spiderwort available at FloraKansas in September. In celebration of Evie's 100th birthday, which would have been August 19 of this year, we will be giving some away - one each to the first 100 customers on Saturday, September 7!



Left: Evie participates in the groundbreaking for the Visitor and Education Center in winter of 1998/99. Center: *Tradescantia tharp*  
Right: Evie enjoyed visiting the Arboretum frequently with family and friends well into her later years.

# From the Director's Desk...

by Scott Vogt, Executive Director and Horticulturist



Back on May 22, 1999, the first FloraKansas: Great Plains Plant Bazaar was held at the Arboretum. As the name FloraKansas implies, this event provided an opportunity for gardeners to purchase hard-to-find Kansas native plants and learn how to cultivate these natives in their own home landscapes. Over 25 years later, this type of landscaping focusing on conservation and sustainability continues to grow in popularity and interest.

The first FloraKansas started with a dinner on May 20, 1999 featuring author and speaker, Roger Welsch talking on “Weeds: Botanical, Human, Philosophical and Others.” Roger was known for his musings on CBS Sunday Morning called ‘Postcards from Nebraska.’

The following Saturday, FloraKansas kicked off with our first plant sale, presentations, and tours. The event poster featured a line drawing by Joyce Fent of butterfly milkweed. From those humble beginnings, FloraKansas has become the largest native plant sale in the state. Last year, we sold over 29,000 plants to members and visitors from across the state.

It's hard to believe that 25 years have passed. There are many things that make me feel older, and participating in this event all those years certainly has been interesting to say the least. We have seen blown over tents, a flooded parking lot with floating plants circling the drain, we have moved hundreds of flats of plants from the greenhouse to the tent in the parking lot, and experienced so many other misadventures along the way.

Through it all, the goal of this event has not changed, to connect people to the Kansas landscape through plants. This connection of people to their landscapes ultimately deepens their understanding of the plants they have chosen. We have seen over the years that an investment of time and energy by the customer along with some mentoring by Arboretum staff and volunteers has proven to be a catalyst to making their landscaping endeavors more successful.

Our plant sales afford us the opportunity to help gardeners, landscapers, and municipalities make good choices of perennial plants for functional and beautiful gardens that increase urban biodiversity.

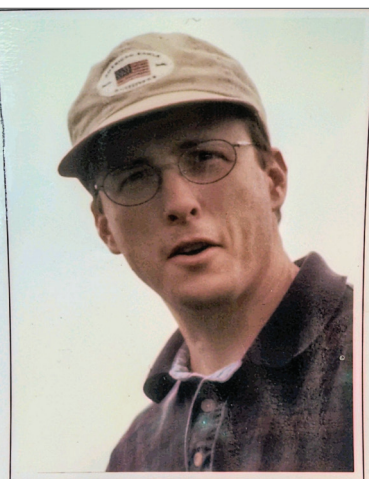
As long as people are interested in sustainable garden solutions that build habitat and conserve water, we will host FloraKansas. Today, more and more landscapes reflect the Kansas prairies and embrace a sense of place. We are proud to have played a small part in making that happen.

Thank you for your support through the years and I will see you at the next FloraKansas plant sale.

## FLORAKANSAS T-SHIRTS

Join us in celebrating a quarter century of FloraKansas with a commemorative tshirt featuring the original 1999 poster artwork by Joyce Fent.

Make a contribution of \$25 or more to claim yours! These shirts will be available at the Fall FloraKansas event. Stay tuned for color options and other details.



### **Vogtus Frustratii Florakanza**

Mature Height: 6' Mondays  
5'9" Fridays

Upright wilt with no seedheads

Exposure: Only if caught

Soils: If startled

*Former board member Duane Graham posted this photo inside the greenhouse at one of the early FloraKansas events. All in good fun!*

# Prairie gardens, a magnet for Wichita schools

by Brad Guhr, Education Coordinator

An enthusiastic group of educators with a combined 447 years of teaching experience came to Dyck Arboretum June 3-7 for our 17th Earth Partnership for Schools (EPS) Summer Institute. Participants learned how to create prairie gardens and/or reconstruct prairie while figuring out how to make the process educational for the kids/adults they serve. A majority of this year's participating educators were from three Wichita magnet schools (Earhart ES Environmental Magnet, Coleman MS Environmental Magnet, and Horace Mann K-8 Dual Language Magnet). Other educational entities participating included Butler County Extension Service, McCormick School Museum, and Prairie Works Design. EPS staff will support these educators for years as they go forward to implement and practice what they learned!



## FALL FLORAKANSAS NATIVE PLANT DAYS

**Member Day:** Thursday, Sept. 5, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
**Public Sale:** Friday, Sept. 6, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
Saturday, Sept. 9, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Sunday, Sept. 8, 71 to 5 p.m.

**PRE-  
ORDERING  
for members:  
Aug 1 to  
Aug 23**



Hesston College  
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## MEET OUR SUMMER INTERN!

Hi, I'm Annalise Miller, the 2024 summer intern at Dyck Arboretum. This fall I will be a Junior at Bethel College, where I am majoring in Biology with a minor in Art.

When we moved to the Goessel area my parents planted a flower bed of plants from the Arboretum's plant sale. Watching the indigo and columbine bloom every year got me interested in native plants and prairies, so when I learned there was a summer internship I immediately knew that was something I wanted to do.

I am so excited to work outside and learn about plants. In my free time I enjoy reading, playing card games, and hanging out with my goats. If you see me around the Arboretum, feel free to stop 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 2025 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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