



Leafings

A Newsletter of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum

Spring/Summer 2023

plantnebraska.org



Spring Affair 2023 Is a Wrap

Despite the chilly, rainy weather, Spring Affair—which was held April 27-29 at the Lancaster Event Center in Lincoln—attracted 3,300 enthusiastic plant shoppers. We are so thrilled with the turn-out, as this event is Nebraska Statewide Arboretum's biggest fundraiser of the year. Proceeds from plant sales help to fund our many tree-planting, garden-making, community-building and environmental education programs that take place statewide all year long.

Spring Affair is a monumental undertaking, and it absolutely would not be possible without the help of our cadre of energetic and committed volunteers. From loading and unloading plants, to watering, deadheading, organizing, cashiering, answering hundreds of questions and helping customers haul their plants around a very big space, our volunteers do the unglamorous work without complaint.

We'd also like to give a special shout-out to Bluebird Nursery, our wholesale plant supplier, and to co-owner Tom Hamernik, who was responsible for getting the thousands of plants (they filled a semi!) to the Lancaster Event Center the day before the start of Spring Affair.

People planting – it sounds simple, but it's the heart of NSA's mission to Plant Nebraska.

If you missed this year's Spring Affair, don't despair—we have several more plant sales in June (see the Save the Date box on page 4).



Mission

We plant Nebraska for healthy people, vibrant communities and a resilient environment.

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A Message from the Executive Director

Spring Affair launches a season of planting, grant projects, sales and events across the state. This year's Spring Affair was one of our best ever, with more plants, more people and more smiles. As the largest fundraiser of the year for NSA, it was also successful financially, helping us to Plant Nebraska the rest of the year. Thank you!

Coming up next is another favorite: Wildflower Week, June 5-11. We'll pack our plants and people and trek west for four days of festivities. Join us if we visit your hometown, or plan to make Wildflower Week part of your Nebraska summer road trip!

Later this summer we'll also celebrate the completion of our new production greenhouse in Lincoln. Look for an invitation to the ribbon cutting in your mailbox soon.

Of course, our favorite part of every spring and summer is the opportunity to connect with all those who help us Plant Nebraska. We couldn't do this work without the people and partners who make it happen. This year we're thrilled to welcome two new affiliate sites—Lincoln Children's Zoo and Woods Park in Lincoln—to our ever-growing list of gardens across the state.

We hope to see you at one of our 100 affiliate sites or at one of our many events and sales this spring and summer. In the meantime, happy planting!



Hanna Pinneo
Executive Director
Nebraska Statewide Arboretum



Garden Help: A Click Away

We have a new searchable resource library on the NSA website. It's a breeze to use—just go to plantnebraska.org, click Resources & Events on the menu bar on the home page, hover your cursor over Tips, Help & How-To, and you'll see the Searchable Resource Library show up at the bottom of drop-down menu.

Once you're there browse through the keyword options and enter the keyword that best fits what you are looking for into the search box (for example "pollinator plants" or "pruning") and a list of all our resources related to that topic will pop up. When you find one that you want to check out, click the arrow, and then download a PDF of the resource. Voila—knowledge at your fingertips!

NSA Heads West for Wildflower Week

Come see us in Chadron, Scottsbluff and Gering or plan to meet us there on your summer road trip! All events are free & open to the public.

Thursday, June 8

Plant Talk & Sunset Wildflower Hike
6:30-8:30 p.m.
Chadron State Park*
15951 Gold Rush Byway, Chadron
Meet at the Central Group Complex Meeting Room
*Park permit required for entrance

Friday, June 9

Planting at Community Ever Green House
9-11:30 a.m.
1210 Overland Trails Road, Gering
Volunteers needed to help plant.

Friday, June 9

Members & Friends Gathering
6-9 p.m.
Papa Moon Vineyards & Winery
230975 County Road, Scottsbluff

Saturday, June 10

NSA Plant Sale
9-11 a.m.
1210 Overland Trails Road, Gering
We'll bring the plants to you!

Learn more about these and other Wildflower Week events statewide at:
plantnebraska.org/wildflower-week.



Celebrating Native Plant Month

Governor Pillen signed a proclamation declaring April to be Native Plant Month in Nebraska. NSA Executive Director Hanna Pinneo (right) and members of the Loveland Garden Club Ann Hosford, Jennifer Pospichal and Paula Ashford (from left to right) presented the governor with swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), a buttonbush shrub (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) and a beautyberry shrub (*Callicarpa*), which will be planted on the grounds of the Governor's mansion.

The Benefits of Swamp Milkweed

Threatened by pesticides, urban development and climate change, the population of monarch butterflies has declined 85% over the past two decades. The good news is that you can help sustain the livelihood of monarchs and other butterflies and moths by helping to create a pollinator corridor in your own neighborhood.

Milkweeds are the required host plants for monarch butterfly caterpillars (female monarchs lay their eggs on milkweeds), and their flowers provide nectar for bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects. By planting milkweed—particularly species that are native to the Great Plains, like swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)—can provide habitat for monarchs and also attract and support other pollinators.



Feature Tree: *American Hop Hornbeam*

Commonly called American hop hornbeam, *Ostrya virginiana* is a small to medium-sized, deciduous understory tree that thrives well in eastern Nebraska. Its birch-like, oval to lance-shaped, sharply-serrated leaves turn brilliant yellow in autumn as seen in the photo of a stunning example at the Lincoln Children's Zoo (right).

Also commonly called ironwood because of its extremely hard, dense wood, the American hop hornbeam's flowers are monoecious, meaning that both male and female appear as separate catkins on the same tree.

While not particularly showy themselves, the female catkins are followed

by interesting clusters of sac-like, seed-bearing pods, which, as the common name suggests, resemble hops.

The American hop hornbeam is a versatile, low-maintenance tree, thriving in full sun to part-shade and tolerating dry conditions and clay soil.

"One of the benefits of the hop hornbeam is that its very hard wood makes it very resistant to storm damage, including those nasty ice storms we sometimes get here in Nebraska," said NSA Horticulture Program Coordinator Bob Henrickson. "It also has handsome foliage that turns a nice yellow in the fall."

According to the University of Kentucky, the hop hornbeam "thrives on neglect," so if you are looking for a low-maintenance tree, this one might be a good choice.



Save the Date

Mark your calendar—you won't want to miss these events and happenings. Visit our events page at plantnebraska.org/events for more information.

June

Plant Sales

June 2 & 23
12:30-4:30 p.m.
UNL East Campus Greenhouse
2150 N. 38th St., Lincoln

Wildflower Week Events in Western NE

June 8-10
See the previous page for details. Also visit plantnebraska.org/wildflower-week for additional events statewide.

Native Plant Sale

June 17
9 a.m. - noon
Camp Brewster at Fontenelle Forest
1313 Bellevue Blvd. North, Bellevue

Pollinator Party and Mini Plant Sale

June 24
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Schramm Education Center
21502 West Highway 31, Gretna

Coming this Fall

Bloom Box Garden Walks

September 12 in Lincoln
September 19 in Omaha

Plants & Pints

October 24
7-9 p.m.
Glacial Till Cider House & Tasting Room
1419 Silver St., Ashland
More information to come.

Lions and Tigers and Buckeyes, Oh My!



From left to right: Lincoln Children's Zoo President Emeritus John Chapo; Zoo Lights Manager Bryan Murphy; NSA Membership and Affiliate Coordinator Toby Burnham; NSA Executive Director Hanna Pinneo; Lincoln Children's Zoo Curator of Horticulture Isaac Fuenning; NSA Green Infrastructure Coordinator Justin Evertson; and Lincoln Children's Zoo Chief Executive Officer Evan Killeen.

The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum recently named the Lincoln Children's Zoo a Landscape Steward Affiliate Site. The zoo, which opened to the public in the summer of 1965 and is now home to more than 400 animals, also features around 300 species of plants and trees, approximately a third of which are native to the Great Plains region.

"Many of us know and love the Lincoln Children's Zoo for its animals and for its educational opportunities, but it's also a botanical treasure trove right here in the middle of our city," said NSA Executive Director Hanna Pinneo. "We are thrilled to welcome the Lincoln Children's Zoo as a Landscape Steward Affiliate Site, and we hope that this distinction will help to shine the spotlight on its beautiful grounds in the years to come."

Learn more about NSA's other affiliate sites across the state at our website, plantnebraska.org.

Volunteer Spotlight: Milda Vaitkus

If you're looking for Master Gardener Milda Vaitkus, of Lincoln, chances are, you can find her in her backyard, where she'll likely be planting, weeding, watering and deadheading from May until late fall. This April, Milda also volunteered for the third consecutive year at NSA's Spring Affair, where she helped with plant unloading, watering, tending the plants and making centerpieces for the Preview Party.

"I love being around plant people, and I love the energy at Spring Affair," Vaitkus said. "Everyone gets really revved up, and I enjoy hearing what other people are buying. It gives me ideas for my own yard."

When she's not gardening or pitching in at Spring Affair, Vaitkus volunteers at the Backyard Farmer garden on UNL's East Campus.

"I picked up gardening a bit later in life," said Vaitkus, who earned her Master Gardener certification three years ago. "It started with an interest in growing my own food and expanded from there to working on the landscaping around my house."

This spring she is replacing part of her lawn with native plants, including grasses like little blue stem and prairie dropseed and perennials like liatris.

"I appreciate the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum's commitment to native plant species," Vaitkus added. "The Arboretum offers a lot of opportunities for education to help people learn about plants."



Q&A with Brad Kindler

NSA Sustainable Landscape Coordinator

Let's get to know Brad Kindler, NSA's newest sustainable landscape coordinator.

Brad has been working in landscaping and project management for the past few years and is looking forward to getting back into design and community work. He'll be partnering with Green Infrastructure Coordinator Justin Evertson, Sustainable Communities Coordinator Kendall Weyers and Sustainable Landscape Specialist Sarah Buckley.

How did you come to love nature and the outdoors?

I feel that love of nature is inherent in humans. However, as we remove ourselves from living close to nature, there are other human tendencies that drive us away from this sentiment. It then becomes our work to continually renew our connection to nature however we can: through observation, awe, gardening, hiking, ceremony, celebration, environmental restoration and supporting conservation.

What's your favorite plant and why?

A big thank you to Native American gardeners for bringing to life my favorite plant: sunflowers. We are so fortunate to live in the heartland of many *Helianthus* species. During summer and fall, you can't drive anywhere in the state without encountering this sunflower shine! Do yourself and your neighbors a favor, and plant them this spring.

What are you reading or watching right now that you are enjoying?

I'm currently reading *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*, which features a series of captivating essays about the link between human mental health and environmental health. It helped me to contextualize appropriate strategies and techniques for how we can better engage our friends and neighbors in environmental action.



Brad Kindler (left) working on site at St. Leo's Church in Omaha.



Who is a role model or inspiration for you and why?

Local USDA-ARS soil scientist John Doran (who passed away this winter) was an important role model and environmental mentor to me. He taught me about curiosity and hard work in the garden, and that this work is best performed in community. John's generosity helped me attend several conferences and trainings that directly led me toward a career in landscape design. It is my desire to honor his wise example by working with all Nebraskans to improve our soil, water and air through our good work at NSA.

If you could pick one place in the world to visit, where would it be and what would you do there?

I'm born and raised in Nebraska; I really only know land. This being the case, I'd go where there is only water—the open ocean. I'd just like to spend a few nights out there and see the sunrise, sunset and starry night skies. I'm sure the different oceans have differing qualities of light, water, waves and temperature, but I wouldn't know since I've never been. Anybody have any open ocean travel recommendations?

NSA Greener Towns Landscape Grant Helps History *Come Alive* in Battle Creek



A landscape rendering depicts what the current Heritage Museum site (left) will look like after the native perennial garden is planted this spring.

Marcie Sextro has big dreams for Battle Creek's Heritage Park, and she and her co-committee members are determined to bring many of those dreams to fruition in time for the town's sesquicentennial celebration in August.

"We want Heritage Park to be an educational, historic and recreational space," said Sextro, who is a member of the Heritage Park Revitalization Committee. The committee recently applied for and was awarded a \$10,000 NSA Greener Towns grant, which will be matched locally.

The grant funds will be used to integrate labeled native plants into the landscape, which will not only accentuate the historical elements of the space—including a sculpture of Pawnee Chief Petalesharo and the Heritage Museum—by serving as an authentic backdrop for the history, but will also serve to educate the public about native perennials and grasses.

"There is a lot of history here, and we are going to bring it to life in a beautiful native landscape that's accessible to everyone in our community," said Sextro. "This will be a place to experience our rich history in a new way."

Got a Potential Grant Project?

The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum provides funding for landscape projects via five cost-share programs: Greener Towns, Waterwise Landscapes, Plant Grants, Trees for Greener Towns and Ten Free Trees. Each program has varying criteria for eligibility. To learn more and to see if one of our grant programs is right for your project or community, visit our website at plantnebraska.org.

Get Involved

JOIN US for events, talks, podcasts and plants sales.

BECOME A MEMBER. We are a nonprofit organization that relies on donors to make our many programs and resources possible. More information at plantnebraska.org.

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Prescott Elementary Gets Planting

When parent volunteers at Prescott Elementary School in Lincoln first heard about NSA's Greener Towns Grant Program, they jumped at the chance to apply.

"We have a number of open spaces around the school where we'd lost some vegetation following a fiber optics installation, and we especially wanted to add some native plants" said Gordon Coke, a member of Prescott's School Neighborhood Advisory Committee.

A team of parent and student volunteers spent a weekend tilling the soil for phase I of the two-part project and then planted a pollinator garden, shrubs at the school's entrance and native grasses to serve as a screen alongside a fence. Phase II of the \$10,000 grant (which Prescott fundraised to match) will feature a rain garden and additional shrubs.

Parents, students and neighbors alike are excited about the sustainable landscape improvements around the school.

"This space is more than an outdoor classroom," said Coke. "It's also a public park, so it's a community resource as well. It will be great to have a space that's beautiful, educational and available to everyone in the neighborhood to enjoy."

