



PLANTNEBRASKA

Leafings

A NEWSLETTER OF PLANTNEBRASKA

FALL 2026

PLANTNEBRASKA.ORG

Celebrating the People Who Help Us Grow

Member Appreciation Week brought together PlantNebraska members for learning, laughter and a little Nebraska weather.

From putting shovel to soil to dreaming big about a greener Nebraska, you are the heart and soul of PlantNebraska's work. Member Appreciation Week is an opportunity each year to celebrate you—our incredible community of members who make everything we do possible!

We celebrated our annual Member Appreciation Week in July with a host of free, members-only activities, including tours of the Downtown Lincoln Arboretum and the gardens at Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha; an energizing evening of Tree-via at White Elm Brewing Company in Lincoln; a super informative webinar about bumble bees with an expert from Xerces Society; free admission all week long to the beautiful Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha; and discounted PlantNebraska merch.



PlantNebraska members at Joslyn Art Museum gardens in Omaha



Michelle, Hanna, Toby and Bob

Unfortunately, Mother Nature didn't cooperate for our planned cyanotype nature art workshop (which requires sun, usually abundantly available in a Nebraska July!)—we'll try again next year—but that didn't stop more than a dozen intrepid members from weathering the drizzle to pick up supplies and glean some tips from Member Coordinator Toby Burnham on how to make a print on their own. PlantNebraska staff took a break from the office and greenhouse on a sunny day later in the week to try our hand at cyanotype under Toby's tutelage, and we know some of you were successful, too, because you emailed us images of your beautiful finished artwork!

Thank you to everyone who turned out for our Member Appreciation Week events this year and a big thank you to each and every one of our PlantNebraska members. We are so grateful to have you as part of our community!

Mission

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

Board Members

Katie Markheim, President
Gering

Jamie Bishop, Treasurer
Lincoln

Megan Forgue, Secretary
Lincoln

Richard Calkins, Alma

John Cariotto, Lincoln

Lisa Kallhoff, Lincoln

Michelle McNea, McCook

E. Nore, Lincoln

Erika Paschold, Lincoln

Tom Riley, Eagle

Amy Slama, Rising City

Meaghan Spitz, Lincoln

Michelle Waite, Lincoln

Dr. Richard Bischoff
Ex Officio, IANR

John Erixson, *Ex Officio*
Nebraska Forest Service

A Message from the Executive Director

Autumn is my favorite time of year. However, this year especially, it seems, people like to rush into it. From pumpkin everything starting in mid-August (excuse me?) to Halloween candy out in July, it feels like people are always looking at the next thing on the calendar. I think our gardens, and nature in general, have a lot to teach us about living in the moment. As I write this in August, I am thoroughly enjoying the plants that are just starting to bloom, the butterflies that are flitting around in abundance, and cool evenings in my kayak. As we embrace the end of one season and the beginning of another, let's look to our gardens to learn a few new lessons, including stopping to smell the roses every so often.



So, with this newsletter in hand, I encourage you to stop and take a few minutes to sit in nature and learn more about what we have happening at this moment at PlantNebraska. Throughout this issue you will learn more about the fun we had this summer, you'll read about a very cool shrub and you'll be able to check in on gardens throughout the state. We are also full of celebration at this time of year, from new Nebraska Statewide Arboretum sites and board members to thanking outgoing board members and award nominations. Finally, join us for Plants & Pints on October 20 for a night of absorbing nature's lessons. We are pleased to welcome Ben Vogt as our keynote speaker, and he is sure to inspire.

Thank you for your support and membership. I hope you'll find some time to take a deep breath and just enjoy the moment you're in.

Happy fall y'all,



Hanna Pinneo
Executive Director
PlantNebraska

P.S. We greatly appreciate your donations that support everything from greenhouse operating expenses to travel expenses for our staff to get to and from planting projects to publications like this one. We've included an envelope in this newsletter in case you wish to support PlantNebraska with a few additional dollars. Thank you!

With Gratitude...

Thank you to our departing board members—Ed Pohren, Carol Thomas, Karen Pesek and Jeff Kennedy—for the years of time, energy and service they dedicated to PlantNebraska. We wish them well in their next endeavors!



Ed Pohren



Carol Thomas



Karen Pesek



Jeff Kennedy

Wildflower Week *Wow*

We hiked, we planted, we trivia-ed! Wildflower Week 2026 was a lot of fun, and the best part by far was meeting so many wonderful PlantNebraska members and friends along the way.

Thanks to everyone who turned out to explore the beauty of Chadron, Harrison, Scottsbluff and Gering with us. We met so many great people and had fun planting, learning and adventuring. The wildflowers were a bit more sparse this year, due to lack of rain particularly in the Scottsbluff/Gering area, but the company was better than ever—and bonus, we saw the state champion ponderosa pine during our beautiful evening hike in Gilbert Baker Wildlife Management Area.

Special thanks to our event partners—Chadron State College, Northwest Nebraska Trails Association (NNTA), Nebraska Game & Parks and Papa Moon—and to our Wildflower Week sponsors, Schrader Landscape Design and JEO Consulting.

Pop-up plant sale in Chadron



Champion ponderosa pine



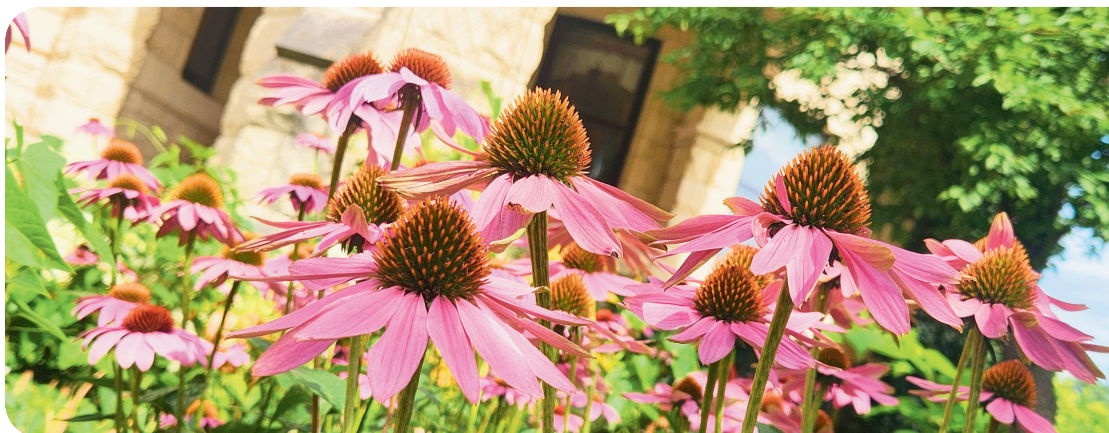
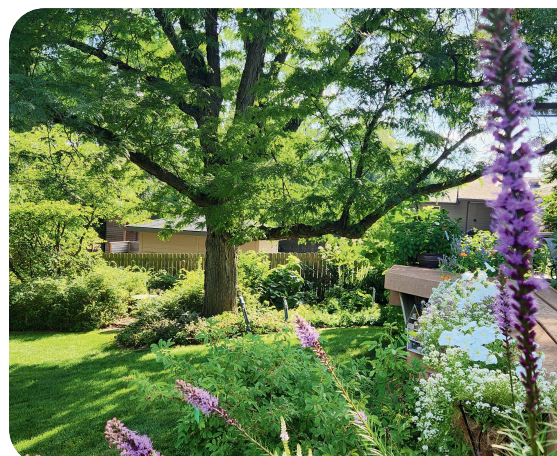
Planting at North Platte NRD



Garden Walks Delight in July



A record number of garden lovers turned out for our Lincoln and Omaha Garden Walks in July to enjoy the sights, sounds and scents of 17 beautiful green spaces. Visitors gleaned tips and inspiration from the hosts, who generously opened their yards and shared advice. Interested in being a Garden Walk host next year? Email Michelle: mderusha2@unl.edu.

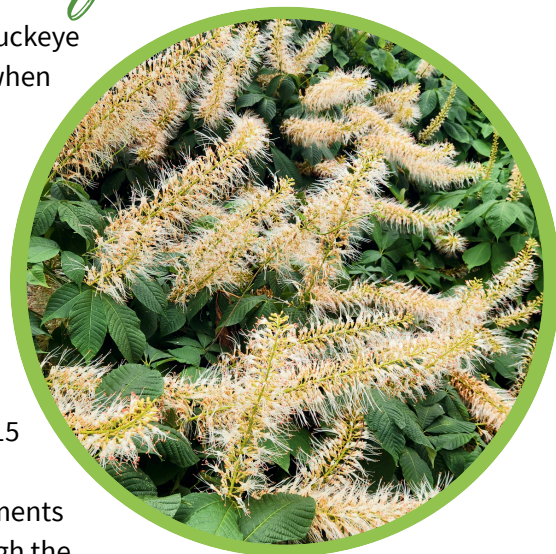


Feature Tree: Bottlebrush Buckeye

If you live in or near Lincoln and haven't yet seen the spectacular bottlebrush buckeye (*Aesculus parviflora*) on UNL's East Campus (near the Dairy Store), particularly when it's in bloom in late June, make a point to check it out next year! Its sheer mass alone is impressive, and it's typically abuzz with hundreds of pollinating insects all eager for a sip of its nectar.

While not native to Nebraska, bottlebrush buckeye is hardy and very resilient in the eastern part of the state, with heat and drought tolerance and a versatility that allows it to thrive in full sun to part shade. Its palmately compound leaves transition from dark green to a rich yellow in the fall.

Typically more of a shrub than a tree, it matures at 8-12 feet with a spread of 8-15 feet, and though it can sucker, it can be managed easily to prevent spread. Its cylindrical panicles of showy, cream-colored flowers with pinkish, feathery filaments and red anthers give way to glossy nuts that are encased in yellow husks. Though the buckeye nuts are toxic to humans, squirrels and other wildlife love them, so you'll be hard-pressed to scavenge any on the ground. If you do manage to find a buckeye nut, slip it into your pocket; legend has it they bring good luck!



Welcome, New Board Members



Lisa Kallhoff, Lincoln

Lisa is a Nebraska native and a Master Gardener who is committed to connecting with community to support environmental conservation. She enjoys walking Lincoln's trails and helping to make every day Earth Day.



Michelle McNea, McCook

Michelle is a registered nurse and a professional case manager. Outside of work, she volunteers as a Master Gardener, serves as a horticulture and food judge at local county fairs and is involved with Beautify McCook.



Erika Paschold, Lincoln

Erika leads fundraising, communications and events for the nonprofit Savanna Institute, a research organization with an agroforestry-focused mission. She spends her free time creating habitat for the dragonflies, foxes, possums and songbirds that frequent her backyard.



Tom Riley, Eagle

Tom is principal of Riley Consulting LLC, teaches ecological engineering and water resources at UNL and is a licensed civil engineer with more than 30 years of experience in water resources, environmental restoration and natural resource management.

Save the Date

More information about all events:
plantnebraska.org/events

Lincoln Plant Sales

PlantNebraska Greenhouses
2150 N. 38th St., Lincoln (on UNL's East Campus)
Fridays, Sept. 4, 18 & 25 and Oct. 2 & 9
12:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Saturdays, Sept. 5, 19 & 26 and Oct. 3 & 10
9 a.m. to 12 noon

Omaha Plant Sale

Saturday, September 12
9 a.m. - 12 noon
Douglas-Sarpy County Extension Office
8015 West Center Road, Omaha

Plants & Pints

Tuesday, October 20
6-9 p.m.
Crete Carrier Riverview Lodge at
Mahoney State Park, Ashland
Featuring keynote speaker Benjamin Vogt.
Tickets: plantnebraska.org/plants-pints

PlantNebraska Awards

Friday, November 6
2-4 p.m.
Pioneers Park Nature Center Prairie Building
Submit nominations at plantnebraska.org/awards.

One Year Later: Look What Grew!

A return visit to a Gering pollinator garden offers a rewarding reminder of what can happen when we give good work time to take root.

We don't always get to see the "after" when we plant a garden. There's always another project waiting, another community to visit, another challenge to tackle. So it was especially rewarding to return to the Scotts Bluff County Courthouse during our June Wildflower Week trip to Gering to see what had grown since we were last there.

Last year, we worked with local 4-H members to plant a pollinator garden at the entrance of the courthouse with funding from a Greener Towns grant. This year, we got to see just how much that garden has grown, and the results were remarkable. In just one year, the garden has flourished, offering a beautiful reminder that meaningful change is possible. Plant the right plants in the right place, give them water and a little care while they get established, keep at the weeding, and then add a healthy dose of patience and persistence. Before long, those small efforts can become something much bigger.

Congratulations to lead volunteer and past PlantNebraska board member Laurie Zitterkopf and her 4-H crew for nurturing this garden and seeing the project through. We're grateful for their hard work and delighted to see it blooming.



Create a Lasting *Legacy*

Making a planned gift to PlantNebraska is one of the best ways you can leave a legacy that will last. Investing long-term in our mission—which focuses on tree planting, garden making and environmental outreach—ensures that you are also investing in Nebraska's ecological future for generations to come.

“PlantNebraska gives me a very strong feeling of belonging. I feel like I am part of something, and that is a really valuable connection. I've given a legacy gift to PlantNebraska because as the organization continues to grow, I want others to be able to feel this same connection.



Nance Harris

Visit PlantNebraska.org/legacy for more information about planned giving.

Nominate Your Favorite Gardener, Educator or Tree Planter



The PlantNebraska Awards are presented to individuals, organizations and communities each year to acknowledge and honor their work in the areas of tree planting, sustainable landscaping and environmental education. Since 1980 we have recognized more than 250 people and organizations in nine award categories.

We are accepting nominations until September 25. Consider nominating someone who has made a difference as a tree planter, sustainable landscaper, educator or community gardener. Learn more about the categories and complete the online nomination form at plantnebraska.org/awards.

PlantNebraska Welcomes New Affiliate Sites

Riverside Discovery Center

Riverside Discovery Center in Scottsbluff was recently reaccredited as an arboretum in the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum network. This accreditation reaffirms the Center's commitment to conservation, education and the preservation of plant diversity in western Nebraska.

"Visitors can now experience an enriched landscape that not only supports native ecosystems but also serves as a living classroom, demonstrating sustainable landscaping practices and the importance of biodiversity in Nebraska's unique environment," said Riverside Discovery Center Executive Director Kei Hodgson. "We could not be prouder to be welcomed back into the fold as one of the newest arboretums within the PlantNebraska family."

Congratulations, Riverside Discovery Center and thank you for your important work!



St. Leo the Great

Congratulations to St. Leo the Great Church in Omaha—their pollinator garden is officially the bee's knees (get it?!). The garden is PlantNebraska's newest Landscape Steward Affiliate site, joining more than 100 arboretums and public gardens in the state that are all about keeping it green and gorgeous.

St. Leo's pollinator garden was made possible in part by two PlantNebraska Greener Towns grants, which enabled volunteers to plant hundreds of perennials and 24 trees, plus install signage and create restful seating areas for visitors to enjoy quiet contemplation.

If you haven't buzzed by St. Leo's garden yet, add it to your fall to-do list. It's the perfect spot to chill out and recharge your batteries (and maybe even learn a thing or two about pollinators)!



In the Spotlight: Aldersgate Gardens

Aldersgate Gardens in Lincoln, a PlantNebraska Accredited Arboretum site, was recently featured in Nebraska Public Media's *Conservation Works* series. Host Carlee Moates visited this thriving oasis to chat with Curator Steve Schafer and PlantNebraska Horticulture Coordinator Bob Henrickson about the transformation of the landscape from a two-acre traditional lawn to a lush arboretum and native prairie garden that's a haven for birds, butterflies, bees and other pollinating insects.

The journey started with a single PlantNebraska Bloom Box and grew to include 135 trees, more than 500 shrubs and thousands of perennials.

Much of the landscaping was funded by grants from PlantNebraska. Along the way, 80% of the grass was eliminated, and work is still ongoing, with new plantings added every year. Watch episode two, "Prairie Life in Miniature," of the

Conservation Works series at nebraskapublicmedia.org/conservationworks.



From Homestead to *Habitat*

A Central City museum's landscape tells the story of Nebraska's past and creates a vibrant habitat for its future.

We're thrilled to partner with the Merrick County Historical Museum in Central City on a landscape transformation rooted in history. The goal? To give visitors a glimpse of what the land might have looked like when their homesteading ancestors arrived in the 1860s.

In just two years, the museum grounds have been transformed from bare soil into a vibrant landscape of native plants. Nebraska botanist Gerry Steinauer hand-selected and hand-sowed the prairie with native wildflowers and grasses, while PlantNebraska designed and planted beds around the flagpole, entrance and parking lot with native shrubs, grasses and perennials.

There is an educational component to introducing the prairie landscape concept into a community, said Schavon Cordsen, Executive Director of the Merrick County Historical Museum. "Not everyone initially understands what we are doing here—they see weeds; they don't see habitat. But we are patient and willing to do the education that will help move public perception over time."

When we visited in June, the prairie was bursting with color and buzzing with pollinators. The new landscape not only creates a beautiful setting for the museum, it offers a living classroom where local students can learn about habitat, history and the many benefits of native plants.

The project with Merrick County Historical Museum was part of our Landscape Design Services. Learn more about our consulting services at plantnebraska.org/what-we-do.



Investing in People and Place

We recently partnered with The Hub Central Access Point for Young Adults, a Lincoln nonprofit that helps young people on their path to independence. Thanks in part to a Greener Towns grant, what was once "an underutilized weed patch" is being transformed into a vibrant outdoor space featuring a pollinator garden, raised vegetable beds and a sustainable bee lawn.

"Things can sometimes be heavy within our four walls," said The Hub Executive Director Rose Hood Buss. "This space is about recognizing the importance of being able to connect with something outside ourselves and the power that can bring."

For Rose, the transformation is about more than plants. "We love this community, and this community deserves beautiful things," she said. "It deserves the opportunity to see this space as something beyond a weed patch."

We applaud The Hub's investment in both people and place, and we can't wait to watch this garden grow.

Get Involved

Join Us!

for events, talks, podcasts and plant sales.

Become a Member!

We are a non-profit organization that relies on memberships and donations to make our many programs and resources possible.

More information about memberships is available at plantnebraska.org.

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INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Plants & Pints

An Evening of Conversation and Connection

Featuring Keynote Speaker Benjamin Vogt, Author and Landscape Designer



Tuesday, October 20 | 6-9 p.m.
Crete Carrier Riverview Lodge
Mahoney State Park, Ashland

We are excited to be hosting our flagship fall fundraising event at a new venue this year! The evening will include a catered buffet dinner, a cash bar and a presentation and book signing by nationally known author and landscape designer Benjamin Vogt.

Tickets are \$50 for PlantNebraska members and \$65 for the general public. All ticket purchases support PlantNebraska's tree planting, garden making and environmental outreach work —thank you!

More information & registration:
plantnebraska.org/plants-pints