



Leafings

A Newsletter of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum

Fall 2023

plantnebraska.org



Top: wildflower hike at Chadron State Park, pincushion cactus (*Mammillaria*), Community Forester Chrissy Land with her grandpa in Gering, bee on bloom, NSA Sustainable Landscape Specialist Sarah Buckley and Member & Affiliate Coordinator Toby Burnham. Bottom: sego lily (*Calochortus nuttallii*), Sallows Conservatory in Alliance, North Platte NRD's Amanda Shepperd, the Glenn Viehmeyer Arboretum in North Platte.

What a Wonderful Wildflower Week

From North Platte, Alliance, Hemingford and Chadron to Scottsbluff, Gering and Ogallala, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum team covered a lot of ground to celebrate Wildflower Week 2023 in June.

Nebraska Wildflower Week was founded in 2006 by the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and is celebrated each year during the first full week in June as a way to increase awareness and appreciation of wildflowers and native plants in both the wild and in our own backyards.

"One of the beautiful things about wildflowers is that they can be discovered and enjoyed right in our own neighborhoods and communities," said Bob Henrickson, NSA's horticulture program coordinator. "Their natural resilience and their ability to thrive even in the toughest environments makes them accessible to just about everyone, if we are willing to open our eyes and notice them."

For the past several years, NSA staff has road tripped to

western Nebraska to host a variety of Wildflower Week events. This year we offered a plant talk and guided wildflower hike at Chadron State Park. Staff also visited residents at Hemingford Care Center, where we had planted a pollinator garden during Wildflower Week in 2022; partnered with Community Ever Green House in Gering to plant 18 raised beds with perennials; hosted a Members & Friends Gathering at Papa Moon Vineyards in Scottsbluff; hosted a plant sale in Gering; and presented a talk in Ogallala to members of the Federated Garden Club of Nebraska. We also explored Scotts Bluff National Monument and spotted a variety of wildflowers both in Western Nebraska and on our trip through the Sandhills on route to Chadron.

"As a statewide organization, we enjoy the opportunity to connect with our partners, members and friends in western Nebraska, as well as the beauty and uniqueness of the natural surroundings," said Hanna Pinneo, executive director of NSA. "We look forward to Wildflower Week every year."

Mission

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

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A Message from the Executive Director

Does life get much better than peak summer in the garden? Our summer started, as it always does, with Wildflower Week (see page 1). The NSA staff made a trip to the Panhandle to see some of the most prolific wildflowers in years thanks to their record rainfall. We were able to connect with members and friends in that area of the state and had a great time exploring the beauty of the Sandhills.



Our first ever Member Appreciation Week in July (see page 5) offered us a similar experience, but this time on the eastern side of the state. While it was a bit of a rain-soaked week (we weren't complaining, we need it!), our spirits weren't dampened one bit as we ventured into a few different gardens and arboreta to enjoy their summer splendor.

If you missed all the fun, don't fret! As we make our way into the fall season, we'll have many more opportunities to connect and enjoy the outdoors together (see the next page for upcoming events).

Join us for the Garden Walks in Lincoln and Omaha in September to get new ideas for your garden. Be sure not to miss Plants & Pints in October, back by popular demand—the perfect time to enjoy a beverage and celebrate the gardening season with your friends. To close out the fall season, we'll celebrate the accomplishments of our NSA award winners in November. This staff favorite event of the year allows us to reflect on and celebrate the good work done throughout the state to Plant Nebraska. Nominations are open now at plantnebraska.org/awards, so get your submissions in soon.

No matter how you choose to do it, enjoy some time in the garden, for we all know these days don't last forever. See you out there soon!

Hanna Pinneo
Executive Director
Nebraska Statewide Arboretum



Buy Books & Support NSA

Are you a bookworm? Do you like to learn more about nature and the environment? Well we have a great opportunity for you to meet your reading goals *and* support the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum at the same time!

When you shop at our Bookshop store—bookshop.org/shop/arboretum—NSA gets 10% from every purchase. We've handpicked selections just for you, from books about trees, landscaping with natives and environmentalism to nature-themed memoirs, novels, children's books and cookbooks.

Visit the NSA Bookshop today at bookshop.org/shop/arboretum and help us Plant Nebraska by buying a book!

Feature Tree

American Yellowwood

Eighteenth century botanist Andre Michaux was the first European to discover yellowwood (*Cladrastis kentuckea*) on a winter day near Fort Blount (in what is now Jackson County, Tennessee) in 1796. The unique branch structure and smooth gray bark stood out to Michaux in the midst of the stark, wintry forest.

Though it's native to the southeast U.S., yellowwood is well-adapted to eastern Nebraska. Maturing to a height and canopy width of 30-50 feet, this deciduous legume is known for its pinnately compound leaves and panicles of fragrant, wisteria-like white flowers. The yellowwood gets its common name from its yellow heartwood, which is sometimes used for specialty furniture as well as in making a yellow dye.

Catch the yellowwood's blooms when you can because they don't last more than a few days at their height. Profuse blooms occur once every two to three years, and it often takes a newly planted tree eight to ten years to produce its first flowers. The blossoms give way to flat, papery seed pods that mature in September through October.

Yellowwood flowers attract native pollinators, particularly honeybees, and yellowwood honey is prized by some beekeepers. The tree is heat tolerant, but unlike some trees native to Nebraska, it won't survive a severe drought without some supplemental water.

Though not often seen in Nebraska, the American yellowwood would make a lovely addition to any eastern Nebraska yard.



American yellowwood in bloom on UNL's East Campus.

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.

September

Friday Plant Sales

September 1, 15, 22 & 29 | 12:30-4:30 p.m.
UNL East Campus Greenhouse
2150 N. 38th St., Lincoln

Saturday Plant Sales

September 9 | 9 a.m. to noon
Douglas Sarpy County Extension Office
8015 West Center Rd., Omaha

September 23
9 a.m. to noon
UNL East Campus Greenhouse
2150 N. 38th St., Lincoln

Bloom Box Garden Walk—Lincoln

September 12
5-7:30 p.m.
More information and registration at:
plantnebraska.org/garden-walks.

Bloom Box Garden Walk—Omaha

September 19
5-7:30 p.m.
More information and registration at:
plantnebraska.org/garden-walks.

October

Plants & Pints

October 24 | 7-9 p.m.
Glacial Till Cider House & Tasting Room
1419 Silver St., Ashland
More information and registration at:
plantnebraska.org/plants-pints.

November

NSA Awards—Nominations now open!

November 3 | 2-4 p.m.
First Plymouth Congregational Church
2000 D St., Lincoln
More information at plantnebraska.org/awards.

Late Bloomers

These three power pollinators will bring bees, butterflies and a punch of color to your fall garden.

Aromatic Aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*)

One of the last wildflowers to bloom, aromatic aster stays loaded with blue-purple, daisy-like flowers well into late autumn (often until mid-November). A robust pollinator, it attracts long-tongued and short-tongued bees, small to medium-sized butterflies and skippers, as well as larvae of the silvery checkerspot butterfly, which feeds on its foliage. Aromatic aster typically grows to a height of one to three feet and tends to form bushy clumps of prolific blooms. It's an easily grown, resilient plant that is tolerant of drought and poor soils. Unfortunately, its name is a bit of a misnomer; aromatic aster's blooms are not fragrant, although when crushed, its leaves emit a balsam-like scent.



Hoary Vervain (*Verbena stricta*)

Known for its long bloom time (July-September), hoary vervain—also sometimes called hoary verbena—has spikey, lavender flowers (occasionally pink or white) that bloom from the bottom up. This perennial tends to grow in clumps with flower stalks reaching up to six feet. It prefers full sun and dry, sandy soils and is very drought tolerant.



Hoary vervain attracts native bees and butterflies and is the larval host for the common buckeye butterfly. Its seeds are also a staple for many small mammals and birds that depend on this widely distributed plant.

Helen's Flower (*Helenium autumnale*)

Another long-blooming (August through mid-October) perennial, Helen's flower offers a vibrant explosion of color in the late-season garden. Yellow, orange and maroon notched petals give the blossoms the appearance of a ruffled skirt and attract bees, wasps, syrphid flies and butterflies in droves.

Helen's flower also goes by the common name sneezeweed, not because it causes allergies but because its dried leaves were once used to make snuff, which, when inhaled, caused sneezing that was thought to rid the body of evil spirits.

The scientific name *Helenium* was chosen by the 18th century Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus in honor of Helen of Troy. Legend has it these flowers sprouted where Helen's tears had landed.



More Power Pollinators for Fall Color

- Orange Stonecrop (*Sedum Kamtschaticum*)
- Dotted Blazing Star (*Liatris punctata*)
- Blue Lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)
- Turtlehead (*Chelone lyonii*)
- Joe Pye Plant (*Eupatorium purpureum*)
- Wichita Mountains Goldenrod (*Solidago 'Wichita Mountains'*)

We Appreciate You!

Member Appreciation Week in July was a great opportunity to say thank you.



NSA members and staff at the Assurity gardens in Lincoln.

We hope our members had as much fun as we did during the first-ever NSA Member Appreciation Week, which took place July 17-21. More than 100 members participated in the events, which kicked off with a lovely, albeit rainy, guided tour around the beautiful grounds of Assurity Life Insurance Company in Lincoln.

Later in the week participants enjoyed a rousing “Tree-ivia” contest at Zipline Brewing Co.—and yes, we do now know that there are seven oak tree species that are native to Nebraska, that the fastest-growing plant in the world is bamboo and other sundry tree and plant facts!

We rounded out Member Appreciation Week with virtual Q&As with NSA Executive Director Hanna Pinneo, Green



NSA members enjoyed a guided botanical tour of the Lincoln Children's Zoo during Member Appreciation Week.



NSA member Bonnie Bake at the Lincoln Children's Zoo.

Infrastructure Coordinator Justin Evertson and Horticulture Program Coordinator Bob Henrickson and enjoyed a guided tour of the botanical treasures at Lincoln Children's Zoo.

Highlights of the zoo tour included seeing one of the state's largest American hophornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*) trees and the unique western soapberry (*Sapindus drummondii*). We also met the zoo's newest members: two baby cheetahs, who were as curious about us as we were about them!

“It was wonderful to do the tours this week,” said longtime NSA member Bonnie Bake (pictured at left). “I really appreciate the information and expertise shared by NSA staff, and the gardens we've seen have been just beautiful.”

Partnering with Schools to Plant

When you think of Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, you might recall our 100+ arboretums and landscape stewardship affiliate sites across the state or the many community projects we do with our municipal partners and local businesses. What you might not know is that we also partner with Nebraska schools to help youngsters (and their teachers!) learn about the importance of trees and native pollinator plants in creating a sustainable landscape.

This past spring we connected with kindergarteners and high schoolers at Wahoo Public Schools to plant northern catalpa, sycamore, American linden and black cherry trees throughout the sprawling grounds. As the trees mature, they will provide much-needed shade in the parking lot and along the street.

“Connecting kids with nature helps them understand that nature is more than things we see, but is living and breathing all around us, and that can have a positive impact on them,” said Josh Synder,

director of learning for Wahoo Public Schools. “Experiences like this tree planting help to reenergize young learners to the positive benefits of the outdoors. Trees, flowers, butterflies and bees...it’s a great place to start.”

Later in the week, NSA staff stopped at Underwood Hills Learning Center in Omaha to help 20 preschoolers plant a pollinator garden. The kids learned about why pollinator plants like milkweed, aster and coreopsis are important to butterflies, bees and other insects, and they enjoyed planting the perennials with their very own trowels donated by NSA’s Bloom Box @School program.

NSA’s Bloom Box @School program provides hands-on gardening experience for students in preschool through high school. Each school receives a 100-square-foot Bloom Box garden with native and well-adapted perennials and grasses hand-selected by NSA horticultural experts.

“This program benefits teachers, students and the environment,” said NSA Sustainable Landscape Specialist Sarah Buckley. “It really is a win-win for everyone, plus it’s a lot of fun!”



Hanna Pinneo teaches preschoolers about pollinator plants.

Spring Planting by the Numbers

NSA staff were busy bees this spring, planting native perennials, grasses and trees from one end of the state to the other. Here’s a quick look at what we got growing in May and June.

9,734 plants and 1,592 trees and shrubs in the ground statewide through our Bloom Box, Greener Towns, Waterwise, Trees for Nebraska Towns and Ten Free Trees programs.

12 schools trained in Project Learning Tree and given free Bloom Box gardens and assistance from NSA in planting.

143 total planting projects in 107 communities across Nebraska.

Visit plantnebraska.org/funding for details about NSA’s grant programs.

Every Tree Counts

Lincoln retiree Carmen Maurer knows first-hand that small projects can yield big results. Maurer, a member of St. Paul United Methodist Church's Justice and Mission Committee, which focuses on issues around climate justice, recently helped to organize a tree planting effort in Lincoln's Peach Park neighborhood, an area the City of Lincoln has identified as a candidate for green revitalization.

With help from the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, the City of Lincoln, Great Plains Nursery and a cadre of generous donors and volunteers, the group planted 37 trees—ten of which were made possible by a grant from NSA's Ten Free Trees Program.

"There's no single solution that can address the overall problem of climate change," said Maurer. "But tree planting is part of the solution. Even if you start small, every tree counts."



St. Paul's volunteer Mark Wilson demonstrates how to plant a tree.

Since planting the trees last fall, a group of ten volunteers from St. Paul's has continued to care for the trees, ensuring they are watered and thriving during the recent drought conditions. Several residents of the neighborhood are also now participating in the tree care as well.

"One of the unexpected benefits that's grown out of this initiative is the connection we've made with new people," said Maurer. "I've made new friends at church, and we now know several of the neighbors who live near Peach Park. You don't necessarily recognize that as a benefit when you first start out, but that connection has turned out to be a wonderful aspect of this project."

Visit plantnebraska.org/funding for more information about Ten Free Trees and other grant programs.



St. Paul's volunteers Carmen Maurer and Mark Wilson.

Greenhouse Update

We are pleased to report that construction of our new greenhouse is picking up steam! After some shipping delays earlier this summer, the contractor was able to complete construction of what's called the headhouse, which is the entryway to the greenhouse where we will greet customers and organize Bloom Boxes for pickup. By the time you read this, construction of the main part of the greenhouse will be well underway!

Our board members had fun signing their names to the headhouse wall while they were on East Campus for the annual board retreat in July!

Back row, left to right: Board President Julie Zahn, Steve Rasmussen, Board Treasurer Carol Thomas, Bob Gemit, Board Secretary Leah Meyer, Jeff Kennedy and NSA Horticulture Program Coordinator Bob Henrickson. Bottom row, left to right: NSA Executive Director Hanna Pinneo, Katja Peppe and Ed Pohren.



Get Involved

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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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Join Our Patreon Party!

In case you missed it in our e-newsletter or on our social media channels earlier this summer, we wanted to let you know that we recently launched a brand-new, super easy and fun way for you to support the work of NSA. Become an NSA Patreon member!

For just \$5 a month, you'll get weekly access to exclusive content, including a growing compendium of Nebraska native (and near native) plants, trees and shrubs with details about size, bloom time and light and soil needs, plus interesting facts about each plant. The beautifully designed infographics for each featured plant are also available as a downloadable "plant card" PDF, so you can start your own personal compendium of Nebraska native plants, trees and shrubs.

We've gotten lots of great feedback; so far new NSA Patreon members are loving the content they are getting each week! Patreon is a monthly subscription service that offers participants fantastic benefits and, at the same time, is an easy way to support the work of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum.

Learn more about our new Patreon subscription service at plantnebraska.org/patreon.